BAE to Install Infrared Countermeasures on Marine KC-130J Aircraft



A CH-53K King Stallion helicopter plugs into a drogue towed behind a KC-130J tanker during an aerial refueling test in April. Marine KC-130Js are getting an infrared countermeasures system. Lockheed Martin/Dane Wiedmann via U.S. Marine Corps

ARLINGTON, Va. – The Marine Corps' KC-130J Super Hercules tanker/transport aircraft is getting an infrared countermeasures system at last.

The U.S. Navy's Naval Air Warfare Center Aircraft Division's Aircraft Prototyping Systems Division has awarded BAE Systems a prime position on a $26.7 million task order to install, integrate and test the Large Aircraft Infrared Countermeasures (LAIRCM) system on KC-130Js.

The LAIRCM system, built by Northrop Grumman, is a tail-mounted pod with a turreted laser system that "improves aircraft capability and survivability by countering advanced infrared missile system threats," according to a BAE Systems release.

The LAIRCM uses laser beams to detect and disable the seekers of incoming infrared-seeking missiles.

Until now, Marine Corps KC-130Js have operated in combat zones such as Afghanistan and Iraq but without a defensive countermeasures system. Some KC-130Js have operated in direct combat with the Harvest HAWK system, which includes Hellfire, Griffin and Viper Strike missiles for close air support missions.

David Nagy, director of flight solutions for BAE,

told *Seapower* that the LAIRCM systems procured from Northrop Grumman will be provided by the government to BAE for installation on the aircraft. BAE will install the LAIRCM systems in up to 19 KC-130Js under the contract over the next five years, if all options are exercised.

The work will be performed in Crestview, Florida, in partnership with Vertex Aerospace Aircraft Integration and Sustainment Division. Under previous contracts, the BAE-Vertex team has installed LAIRCM systems on Air Force and foreign military aircraft,

“The BAE Systems turnkey solution provides program management, inventory control, engineering support, installation, and system testing of the DoN [Department of the Navy] LAIRCM upgrade,” the release said. “Aircraft maintenance and support activities will also be provided as required. This is the second task order awarded to BAE Systems under the Prototyping and Limited Production indefinite delivery indefinite quantity contract.”

“The program office looks forward to working with BAE Systems on the DoN LAIRCM installations,” said Navy Capt. Steven Nassau, program manager for Naval Air Systems Command’s PMA-207, as noted in the BAE Systems release.

“This competitive award will allow the Marine Corps to move from government depot installation to industry without a gap in services. It is a great reflection on the dedication of the KC-130J Mission Systems Team and the contracts office. It also speaks to the flexibility of both the Navy and industry.”