LEONARDO AWARDED €690 MILLION CONTRACT FOR THE AW101/CH-149 CMLU PROJECT

News / Manufacturer



Canadian Department of National Defence has awarded Leonardo a €690 million contract for the AW101/CH-149 “Cormorant” Mid-Life Upgrade Project for 16 aircraft in total, comprising 13 existing Cormorant Search and Rescue Helicopter currently in-service and the augmentation of a further three aircraft. This contract will enhance the aircraft’s systems and technologies, ensure compliance with emerging airspace requirements, extend the life expectancy of the fleet to 2042+ and enable the return of Cormorant helicopters to the Main Operating Base Trenton.

After distinguished 20-years of service life, the CH-149 Cormorant fleet will now undergo a mid-life upgrade, further to Team Cormorant’s proposition. The team is a collaboration of Leonardo and is supported by its principle Canadian subcontractor IMP Aerospace and Defence together with GE Canada, and Collins Aerospace Canada. The majority of the CMLU work will be performed in Canada, primarily at IMP’s Halifax, N.S. facilities.

The CMLU Project will transition Canada’s AW101/CH-149 “Cormorant” SAR helicopter fleet to the latest standard currently being delivered for SAR in Norway and arguably the best search and

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rescue helicopter in the world. The CMLU Project will include; state-of-the-art avionics, a new glass cockpit, more powerful digitally-controlled engines, wireless in-cabin communications, the latest SAR sensors including Electro Optical Infra-Red device and Mobile Phone Detection Location System –enabling less search and more rescue.

Alessandro Profumo, Chief Executive Officer of Leonardo, commented: “Leonardo is proud to lead with our Team Cormorant partners the AW101/CH-149 “Cormorant” Search and Rescue helicopter fleet upgrade as announced by the Canadian Government. With the Cormorant helicopter the Government is getting the right equipment for the Canadian Forces, at the best price for Canadians, with the right benefits for Canadian industry.”

Gian Piero Cutillo, Managing Director of Leonardo Helicopters, stated: “The AW101/CH-149 “Cormorant” Search and Rescue helicopter fleet will provide the Royal Canadian Air Force with the sustainment of a robust, high-tech all weather SAR capability across Canada. The CMLU programme through Team Cormorant will reduce the cost of fleet ownership, while further increasing reliability, capability and safety for Canadian people.”

In July 2022 there was the first operational flight anniversary of the Cormorant, which took place in 2002, and the first delivery took place in October 2001. The fleet has now achieved in excess of 100,000 flight hours. The AW101 is the most advanced medium lift helicopter available today and is in service, in production and in demand for its proven performance. The AW101 offers long-range, large capacity and advanced technology, all combined in a cost-effective, multi-mission aircraft opening up a new era in rotary wing operations. Over 220 AW101 helicopters have been ordered so far by customers worldwide to perform a large number of roles including SAR, Combat SAR, Personnel Recovery, Special Forces Operations, utility, troop transport, Anti-Surface Warfare, Anti-Submarine Warfare, Airborne Early Warning, mine sweeping. The global fleet has exceeded 500,000 flight hours in operations from the Arctic to the Antarctic.

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