

MILITARY AIRCRAFT

June 21st 2016

Airbus to operate Heron 1 drones for Germany also in Mali

The German Defence Procurement Agency (BAAlnBw) and Airbus Defence and Space have signed a contract to provide Heron 1 surveillance drones to support the Bundeswehr mission in Mali.

Similar to the mission in Afghanistan active since 2010, the unmanned aerial systems will be leased from Israeli manufacturer IAI and operated by Airbus. Military missions will be also in future flown solely by military personnel. The operations in Mali will start in November 2016 and are initially planned until February 2018.

“A major success factor for this new assignment is our experience gained in more than 2300 missions over Afghanistan” said Thomas Reinartz, Head of Sales for unmanned aerial systems at Airbus. “There we have proven our reliability to the full satisfaction of our customer – with a fleet availability higher than 95 percent.”

On July 1st 2016 Bundeswehr has taken over responsibility for the intelligence unit in Mali from the Netherlands. In the perimeter of the UN MINUSMA mission German forces are taking on their tasks mainly in the Gao region. The current threat scenarios and the size of the area of operations – the north of Mali is more than twice the size of Germany – require a long endurance surveillance system. Based on the extremely positive experience made in Afghanistan, German forces will therefore now also deploy the Heron 1 to Mali.

By using the current operator model the Bundeswehr benefits in various aspects. In addition to the high availability of the fleet and a high flexibility in terms of contract duration the German forces can focus entirely on their core missions. They also profit from the system's full compatibility and interoperability within NATO.

The extension of the Heron 1 operational model is paving the way also for the next drone generation Heron TP, which has been selected by the German Bundeswehr Chief of Staff to succeed the Heron 1 and bridge the timeframe until a European drone development will be available.

About Heron 1

Manufactured by the Israeli company IAI, Heron 1 is a medium altitude long endurance (MALE) UAS for the respective theatre of operations. The aircraft has a wingspan of 17 metres and a typical mission endurance of over 24 hours. The Heron 1's military tasks include detecting booby traps from the air, accompanying convoys and patrols, assisting forces in combat situations, reconnaissance and surveilling routes, establishing movement profiles, long-term monitoring, supporting situational assessments, and protecting property and military camps. The UAS is also used to support humanitarian missions as well as to safeguard the national security of countries.

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About Airbus Defence and Space

Airbus Defence and Space, a division of Airbus Group, is Europe's number one defence and space enterprise and the second largest space business worldwide. Its activities include space, military aircraft and related systems and services. It employs more than 38,000 people and in 2015 generated revenues of over 13 billion Euros.

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