

Rome, 19th May 2014

Selex ES Falco saves 14 lives within the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo

On the 5th May in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), a Falco Remotely Piloted Aerial System (RPAS) operated by Selex ES, a Finmeccanica company, picked up images of people in danger after a boat capsized in Lake Kivu near Goma. Thanks to the alert, UN peacekeepers were able to intervene and 14 people were rescued. At least one person died and a dozen others are still missing. It is unclear how many people the boat had been carrying.

RPAS, often referred to as 'drones' have thus proven that they can be effectively used to identify refugees who encounter trouble during sea voyages and alert rescue forces. The surveillance that led to this particular rescue was carried out as part of the United Nation's MONUSCO peacekeeping mission. Selex ES was awarded the multi-year service agreement by the UN last July and has since had the Falco flying humanitarian and security information gathering missions in the region.

Potential future uses for the Falco system include expanding the MONUSCO surveillance mission and to help monitor the ongoing conflict in the Central African Republic in support of the UN's MINUSCA mission.

The FALCO is an unarmed, medium-altitude, medium-endurance RPAS able to operate from semi-prepared airstrips. The platform was selected by the UN because of its ability to perform long-endurance surveillance missions, its outstanding reliability, ease of deployment and excellent track record in service operations. The aircraft has a range of 250km (155 miles) which can be extended via optional upgrades.