

Royal Air Force selects Leonardo for counter-drone research programme

- A reinvigorated R&D programme will see Leonardo supporting the RAF in understanding requirements for a potential future core capability which will be able to respond to the rapidly-evolving threats posed by hostile drones
- The three-year programme will start in early 2020 and examine how operators will be able to detect, track, identify and defeat rogue drones as the technology continues to evolve
- Leonardo counter-drone (also known as counter-unmanned aerial system or C-UAS) technology has already seen use with the RAF and is under contract for the Italian Army and Air Force

London, 11th September 2019 - At the DSEI 2019 exhibition, Leonardo has announced that it has been selected by the UK's Royal Air Force (RAF) to support the next stage of their research and development programme. The study will explore the current threat posed by hostile drones and how this is likely to evolve in future, as well as evaluating a range of technologies that could form a future RAF counter-drone capability. The programme is expected to last three years and will commence in early 2020.

The threat of rogue drones has been well-publicised in recent months, with small, affordable aircraft widely-available on the open market. Most concerningly, drone technology is evolving rapidly, creating a challenge for organisations which need to secure themselves against the misuse of such aircraft. The RAF's research programme will inform how the Air Force will respond to current and future threats and keep pace with technology over time, examining how operators will be able to detect, track, identify and defeat rogue drones.

Leonardo was chosen because of its pedigree in counter-drone technology. In 2018 and 2019, following drone sightings at Gatwick and Heathrow airports, elements of the Company's counter-drone technology were deployed by the RAF to allow airport operations to resume. The Company offers its scalable and modular systems to military and civil customers in the UK and internationally and has already been contracted for C-UAS equipment for the Italian Army and Air Force. The RAF's research programme will draw on this experience and build on previous collaborative C-UAS research to understand and meet the threat of rogue drones.

In the long-run, the research and development programme will help understand and inform requirements for a core RAF counter-drone capability, which would then be used to protect RAF Bases.