

Australia set for multi-year at-sea trials of S-100 Camcopter on naval platforms



The aviation gasoline-powered S-100 unit, seen here in Royal Australian Navy livery. Source: Schiebel

Key Points

- The Royal Australian Navy is set to begin a multi-year evaluation of the S-100 Camcopter UAS across its aviation-capable ships
- Trials will prepare the service for more advanced shipborne UAS deployment concepts

The Royal Australian Navy (RAN) will soon begin shipborne trials of the Schiebel S-100 Camcopter rotor-winged unmanned aerial system (UAS) across its aviation-capable platforms, an Australian Department of Defence (DoD) spokesperson confirmed with Jane's on 9 April.

The service has recently completed a series of verifications to ensure that the JP-5 heavy-fuel-powered version of the system is suitable for shipborne evaluations, and is now cleared to conduct the trials at-sea.

The trials will be conducted as part of Australia's Navy Minor Project (NMP) 1942 programme, which seeks to imbue the RAN with interim shipborne vertical take-off and landing (VTOL) UAS competencies. NMP 1942 is widely seen as a precursor to Project SEA 129 Phase 5, which will equip the RAN's offshore patrol vessels and major surface combatants with operational UAS capabilities.

The RAN previously relied on a single aviation gasoline-powered S-100 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to inculcate its personnel with unmanned rotary-winged operations. The UAV, which was on loan from Schiebel while awaiting the delivery of two contracted heavy fuel variants of the Camcopter, was deployed with the RAN's Navy UAS Unit (NUU) based within the Headquarters Fleet Air Arm at HMAS Albatross.

The Australian government signed a contract with Schiebel in December 2016 for two Camcopter units in a package that includes three years of technical support, and an interim loan unit for initial personnel training purposes.