

Singapore Airshow 2020: Schiebel explores ASW innovations



Austrian company Schiebel is exploring anti-submarine warfare (ASW) roles among potential new applications for its Camcopter S-100 UAV platform.

Neil Hunter, director of business development at Schiebel, explained to Shephard: 'We're now looking at maritime radars for the obvious reasons. And then, if you see the number of submarines that are being procured around the world by various nations, we're starting to look into anti-submarine warfare.'

Hunter noted that sonobuoys have been getting smaller as technology improves, adding that Schiebel is also looking at an active dipping sonar that could be lowered by cable from the central fuselage section of the S-100.

He acknowledged that this ASW development work is at an early stage, but Schiebel has already identified two companies 'who have that capability and who are very keen to work with us'.

Hunter expects it to take another 12 months before Schiebel could demonstrate these new capabilities.

Schiebel's most recent achievement in Asia was winning a contract from the Royal Thai Navy (RTN) in November 2019 against contenders from Europe and Asia. Schiebel will provide a full system, MX-10 sensors and a full eight-week training package in conjunction with local partner MoraThai Defence Company.

At this stage it is unclear on which ships the RTN plans to use these rotary-winged UAVs, but the navy recently introduced a South Korean-built frigate. The RTN is expected to operate the systems from land initially before attempting to take them to sea.

Other S-100 customers in the region are Australia, Malaysia and South Korea, with the latter placing a follow-on order in 2019 according to chairman Hans Georg Schiebel. The Republic of Korea Navy lodged its first order with Schiebel in 2011.

Australia acquired S-100s with S2 heavy fuel engines, which passed verification tests in Austria last November. These diesel engines offer better fuel consumption, more power and therefore an enhanced payload capacity and higher service ceiling, said Schiebel.

The S-100's maximum take-off weight is 200kg and it can carry a 50kg payload. Half of that payload can consist of fuel and the other half the sensors. The Camcopter's typical endurance is 6h, but this can rise to 10h when an external fuel tank is added.