

## Defence shelves SEA 129/5 in favour of Schiebel Camcopter



The Commonwealth has shelved the Royal Australian Navy's Project SEA 129 Phase 5 Block 1 Maritime Unmanned Aircraft System (MUAS) tender process, and has instead elected to make a sole-source acquisition of the Raytheon Australia/Schiebel S-100 Camcopter.

The Camcopter is already in service with the RAN's 822X squadron in a trial capacity under the long-running Navy Minor Program (NMP)1942 effort that was designed to inform SEA 129 Phase 5's requirements. Five systems were shortlisted in March 2021 under an invitation to respond (ITR) to the requirement, and limited request for tender (RFT) was due to have been issued in early 2022.

"Schiebel Pacific welcomes the decision of the Commonwealth of Australia to speed up the provision of its UAS capability by initiating a single source acquisition of the CAMCOPTER S-100," a 4 May Schiebel company release reads. "This will enable the RAN to accelerate the capability acquisition they need and together with our local partners, we are committed to deliver the best UAS solution for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN).

"The offered Maritime Uncrewed Aircraft System (MUAS) builds on the capability that has been provided by the proven CAMCOPTER S-100 air vehicle currently in service with the RAN and is expected to create about 100 new Australian jobs," it adds. "The design, development, manufacture, integration and support of the system will all be undertaken in Australia."

Apart from the Raytheon/Schiebel team, other ITR respondents included Textron Australia with the Aerosonde Mk4.7/HQ, a Northrop Grumman and Leonardo teaming with the AWHero, Insitu Pacific with the ScanEagle/Integrator, and BAE Systems Australia which hadn't announced its preferred air vehicle when the ITR was issued. The companies were reportedly told in late April that the program will not proceed to tender.

The acquisition will reportedly see 40 S-100 air vehicles procured, with a substantial amount of manufacturing and systems integration performed by Schiebel Pacific and Raytheon Australia at Nowra where the systems will be based.

The air vehicles will be operated from the Navy's ANZAC class frigates and the forthcoming SEA 1180 Arafura class offshore patrol vessels, and later, the SEA 5000 Hunter class frigates.