LOCKHEED'S "TEAM 21? FINALLY CONFIRMED AS AIR 5428 WINNING BIDDER

News / Manufacturer

A Lockheed Martin-led teaming will provide the RAAF's new Pilot Training System operating 49 Pilatus PC-21 training aircaft from RAAF Base East Sale in Victoria and Pearce in Western Australia.

Defence Minister Kevin Andrews made the long-anticipated announcement that the 'Team 21? consortium of Lockheed Martin, Pilatus and Hawker Pacific had been selected as preferred tenderer for the RAAF's Air 5428 Pilot Training System project during a visit to East Sale on Sunday.

The new pilot training system will see ADF basic flying training currently undertaken at the Basic Flying Training School (BFTS) with BAE Systems at Tamworth in NSW relocate to East Sale, already home to the RAAF's Central Flying School (CFS), while advanced training will continue to be conducted from RAAF Base Pearce, home to the RAAF's 2 Flying Training School (2FTS).

"The new pilot training system will enable us to use the latest in simulator technology that can be adapted to student needs and different learning styles to allow students to progress through

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training faster," Chief of Air Force Air Marshal Leo Davies said in a statement.

"This will create efficiencies for pilot training and allow more flexibility for our student pilots."

Efficiencies will also mean the new contractor-supported Pilot Training System will see an increase in ADF pilot training throughput despite operating fewer aircraft than the current system.

According to Minister Andrews' statement the new pilot training system will, from 2019, graduate 105 pilots a year, up from 77 currently, with an annual intake at RAAF Base East Sale of of up to 165 trainee pilots. Of the 49 PC-21s to supplied under AIR 5428, 22 will be based at Sale.

East Sale's gain is Tamworth's pain under the AIR 5428 decision.

Team 21 was selected ahead of a competing bid from BAE Systems, which together with CAE Australia and Beechcraft had offered a solution based around the Beech T-6C aircraft. BAE had proposed to continue conducting basic training at Tamworth, but, as required under the tender, had offered West Sale as an alternative option for basic training.

The decision will be a blow to BAE Systems' extensive flying training operation at Tamworth. BAE will continue to provide ADF pilot training there through until the end of 2019, and does also provide military flying training for Singapore, Brunei and Papua New Guinea, but the decision seems likely to see a major rationalisation of the Tamworth operation.

The loss of BFTS from Tamworth Airport will also likely see the regional NSW city's air traffic control tower closed.

But for East Sale: "The training system will also support approximately 162 jobs as part of the ongoing training of students at RAAF Base East Sale," the Minister said.

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