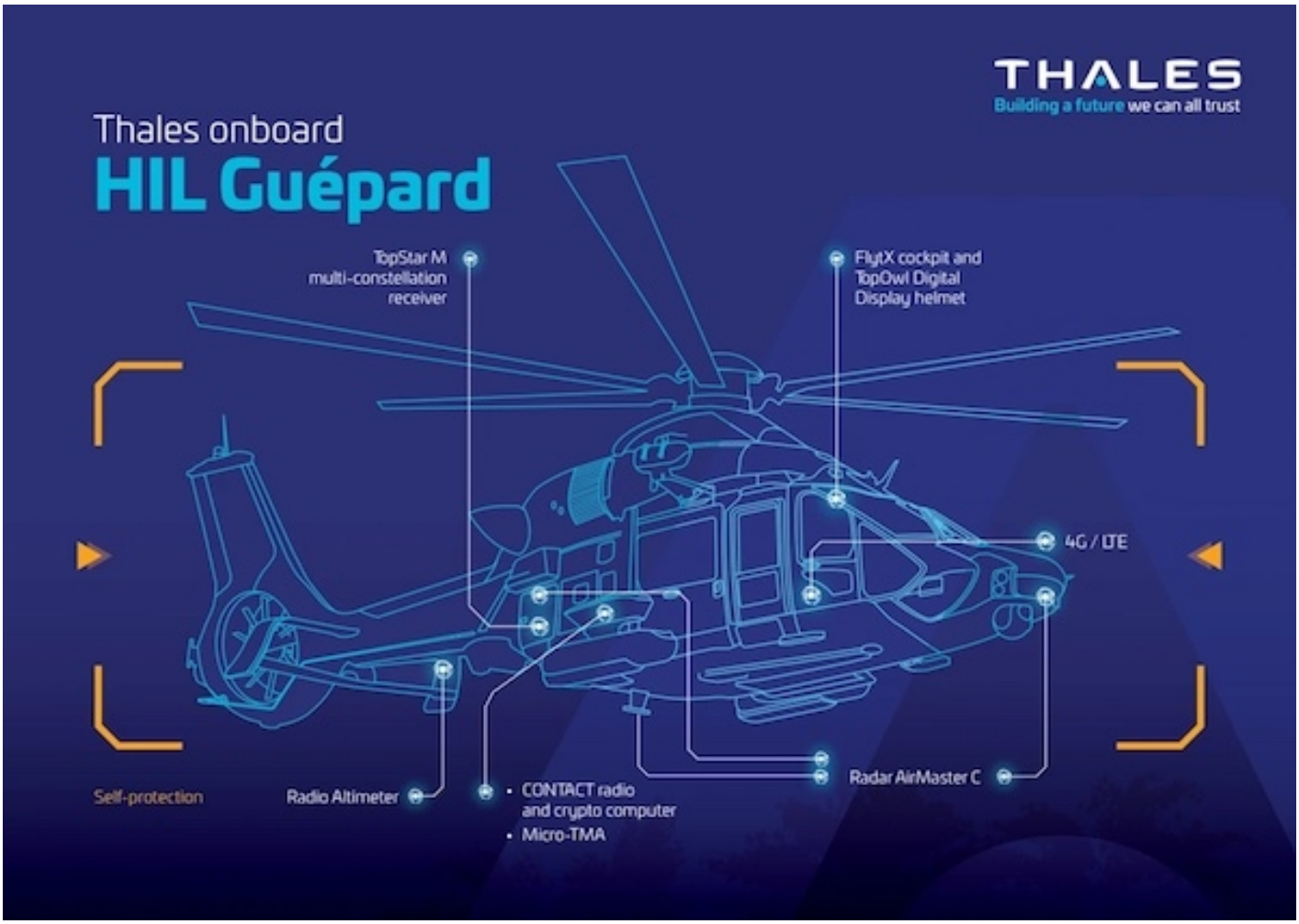
THALES ON BOARD FRANCE 169 GUÉPARD HELICOPTERS

News / Manufacturer



The Thales technologies selected by Airbus Helicopters, industrial prime contractor for the programme, and the French defence procurement agency (DGA), the contracting authority, will provide the 169 Guépard joint light helicopters with a complete set of high-performance solutions relying on innovative connected touchscreen interfaces for all three branches of the armed forces from 2027.

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The Guépard ("Cheetah") is the military version of the H160 from Airbus Helicopters. It will be capable of performing up to 20 different mission types, including reconnaissance, fire support, special forces infiltration and command support for the 80 Guépards for the French Army; naval air combat, naval group protection and support, special forces operations and State action at sea for the 49 Guépards for the French Navy; and airspace surveillance and protection, search and rescue, fire support and intelligence for the 40 Guépards for the French Air and Space Force. The joint forces dimension of the programme will optimise crew training as well as equipment maintenance and repair.

The helicopter's new cockpit will be equipped with the FlytX avionics suite, which features the most advanced technologies and an all-new ergonomic design. Co-developed with pilots over the last 10 years, the compact FlytX avionics suite for helicopters is fully connected and customisable to offer an unprecedented level of operational flexibility. Direct, intuitive touchscreen user interfaces improve the pilot's interactions with the cockpit systems and enhance situational awareness so that aircrews can focus on their core mission tasks.

Rounding out the array of tools available to pilots, the TopOwl Digital Display, the latest addition to the Thales range of helmet-mounted sight and displays, heralds a new era of augmented reality in the cockpit. TopOwl combines sensor data and video feeds to enable pilots to fly the helicopter in a virtual environment in degraded conditions, and supports closer cooperation between crew-members to maximise operational capabilities.

Developed under joint funding by Thales and the DGA, the compact fixed-panel AirMaster C radar weighs less than20 kg for longer endurance and higher cruising speeds. Its ability to detect multiple targets simultaneously at long range and very short range reduces aircrew workload by providing an extended surveillance capability in all weather conditions and operational environments. AirMaster C is designed for all types of maritime, ground and air surveillance missions. The armed forces will rely on the radar's scalable architecture and self-learning capabilities to classify and share huge volumes of operational data.

Crews will be protected by a defensive aids system optimised for the Guépard. This self-protection system will detect threats across the entire electromagnetic and optical spectrum and automatically initiate decoy launchers and other countermeasures. Self-protection strategies and protocols will be developed prior to deployment by groups of experts from the armed forces using an advanced mission planning and analysis infrastructure. A Thales architecture based on the CATS-150, which has been proven in operations on board the NH-90, was selected for its competitive and technical performance, its scalability and its capacity to handle sensitive electronic warfare data.

To meet the multi-mission requirements of all three branches of the armed forces, the Guépard will rely on an advanced connectivity suite providing a wide range of secure communications services. The suite will include the software-defined radio developed for the CONTACT programme, associated with a compact airborne encryption system, making it possible to integrate the helicopter with the cooperative systems developed under the SCORPION programme for the French land forces, interact with other aircraft deployed by the French Air and Space Force, and guarantee interoperability up to NATO Secret level. With the Micro-TMA resilient high-data-rate datalink, and interoperability with 4G/LTE networks, the joint light helicopter will pave the way for hyper-connected operational missions. The Guépard will also feature a radionavigation suite and a new, small form factor IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) system.

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In addition, the latest-generation TopStar M GPS/Galileo multi-constellation receiver will enhance the capabilities of the helicopter's navigation system.

"Airbus Helicopters and the French defence procurement agency are placing their trust in the latest generation of Thales technologies to meet demanding new standards for military aviation. We are proud to be taking part in such a crucial programme for the armed forces." Patrice Caine, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Thales

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