UAE MILITARY PLACES ORDER FOR UNMANNED PIAGGIO HAMMERHEADS

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The UAE military said it has signed a $346 million contract to acquire eight Piaggio P.1HH HammerHead unmanned aircraft. The general headquarters of the UAE Armed Forces made the announcement on March 8, during the Unmanned Systems Exhibition and Conference in Abu Dhabi.

The military signed the contract with Abu Dhabi Autonomous Systems Investments (ADASI), whose chairman, Homaid Al Shemmari, is a principal of the government-owned Mubadala Development Co. Since September, Mubadala has owned 100 percent of Piaggio Aerospace, which is based at Villanova d'Albenga, Italy, southwest of Genoa.

The HammerHead is an unmanned derivative of the P.180 Avanti twin-turboprop business aircraft, first revealed at the IDEX defense exhibition in Abu Dhabi in February 2013. Piaggio reported the first flight of a remotely piloted demonstrator in November that year, followed by the first flight of a prototype in December 2014—both from Trapani air base in Italy. The Italian air force has said it will acquire three HammerHead systems consisting of six aircraft.

All of the aircraft the UAE Armed Forces plans to acquire will be equipped with electro-optical/infrared sensors, radar and advanced communications systems, according to the announcement. The contract also provides for training and logistics support.

"This important contract recognizes Piaggio Aerospace's efforts in establishing a world-class military program and state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities that position the business for long-term sustainable success," Piaggio CEO Carlo Logli said in a statement accompanying the announcement.

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