

EMBRAER KC-390 TO RIVAL TURBOPROPS IN CANADIAN FWSAR COMP

News / Manufacturer



Embraer will put forward an ambitious bid to replace Canada’s antiquated fixed-wing search-and-rescue fleets, offering its in-development KC-390 military transport for the role.

The Brazilian manufacturer says the KC-390 is “ideally suited” for the mission, currently performed by six de Havilland Canada CC-115 Buffalo and 13 Lockheed Martin CC-130 Hercules aircraft.

Operated by the Royal Canadian Air Force, the fleet operations range from the US border to the Arctic circle. The 48-year-old, short-takeoff DHC-5 supports operations in Canada’s mountainous western regions, while the modestly younger C-130s are on the East Coast.

Canada has not mandated a certain number of aircraft, and will even accept mixed-fleet proposals. The government reportedly expects a contract award in 2016 and final delivery by 2023.

This puts the squeeze on Embraer, which expects to certify the KC-390 in 2017 with first deliveries in 2018. “We don’t see any issue to comply with the delivery schedule,” the company says, while declining to reveal the quantity of aircraft offered.

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Embraer 390 in search-and-rescue livery.

Embraer

The aircraft will not need significant modification, Embraer says, and it already comes standard with electro-optical/infrared and radar sensors, as required.

“We believe that we can offer the best solution for Canada by fully meeting the operational needs,” a company spokesman tells Flightglobal. “The KC-390 . . . was designed to perform SAR missions in the most demanding environments since its conceptual stage.”

Embraer confirms it will respond to the government's FWSAR request for proposals issued in March, which closes January 11. That makes Embraer the third company to confirm its bid for the long-running procurement, putting the KC-390 against the Airbus C295 and Alenia Aermacchi C-

27J turboprops.

Lockheed declined to reveal its intent, but could offer the C-130J. “Out of respect for our customer’s competitive tender, Lockheed Martin will not provide comments on the fixed-wing search-and-rescue RFP,” a spokeswoman for the incumbent says this week.

Embraer has been considering its participation for some time, and promoted the KC-390 alternative at the Canadian Aerospace Summit in Ottawa last month.

The medium twin-turbofan tanker-transport is being developed for the Brazilian Air Force, and offers long-range, high-speed operations with fly-by-wire controls.

“We have to highlight the ability of the KC-390 to go further, much faster, and to stay longer on the scene” compared to its rivals, the spokesman says. “This will be key to dramatically increasing the probability of saving lives.”

The long-delayed FWSAR acquisition was initiated in 2002 and has experienced repeated delays and setbacks ever since. The aircraft would be stationed at bases across Canada, operating alongside the nation’s rotary-wing search-and-rescue assets.

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