

LOCKHEED MARTIN TARGETS FURTHER MH-60R SALES, BUILDING ON AUSTRALIAN SUCCESS

News / Manufacturer



Lockheed Martin has hailed progress on the Royal Australian Navy's **MH-60R** Seahawk 'Romeo' project, with 14 of the 24 naval combat helicopters being acquired so far delivered ahead of schedule.

Of those, 13 aircraft are already here in Australia, and one is in the US for the purposes of testing. Three more of the anti-submarine warfare/anti-surface warfare multi-mission helicopters are due to be delivered by the end of this year, and the remainder will have been delivered by August next year.

"We are beyond the point where all our major development milestones have been completed and we are really transitioning into sustaining support now, but it has been a pretty busy year; there has been a lot going on," said Tom Kane, director of naval helicopter programs at Lockheed Martin, in a briefing ahead of Pacific 2015.

725 Squadron was recommissioned in June, marking the formal induction of the Romeo helicopter into the fleet.

The MH-60R is manufactured by Sikorsky and equipped with mission systems and sensors by Lockheed Martin Mission Systems and Training. Lockheed Martin announced in July that it had agreed to acquire Sikorsky, but its plans to align the company under the Mission Systems and

Training business segment will not result in any changes in the way the aircraft are manufactured and supported, Kane said.

The RAN will be able to provide eight Romeo helicopters embarked concurrently aboard the Anzac class frigates and Hobart class Air Warfare Destroyers, with the rest based at HMAS Albatross conducting training and maintenance activities.

Successful delivery of the Australian project known as AIR 9000 Phase 8 could pique the interest of potential MH-60R customers. Denmark has agreed to buy nine helicopters as the second international customer for the Romeo, and Lockheed Martin is eyeing other opportunities, particularly in the Middle East.

“The Saudis have expressed interest in procuring some aircraft and we are working through that right now with the US Navy, the specifics; that contract has not yet been let to industry,” Kane said. “There are some other countries in the Middle East that are interested, but it is probably premature to discuss the specifics of those right now.”

The US Department of State approved the possible sale of 10 aircraft to Saudi Arabia under the Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program earlier this year at an estimated cost of US\$1.9 billion.

02 OCTOBER 2015

SOURCE: AUSTRALIAN AVIATION

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