

News

CONTRACTS

Relaxation of US export licence opens door to Australian bids

A bill recently passed by the Australian Federal Parliament will make it easier for Australian manufacturers to bid for US defence contracts.

The Defence Trade Controls Bill 2011 was tabled by Minister for Defence Materiel Jason Clare and passed by the House of Representatives in November.

It effectively implements the US Defence Trade Cooperation Treaty, which governs the trade of defence and dual-purpose technology between the two nations.

Previously, manufacturers had to seek a separate licence for each export in accordance with the US International Traffic in Arms Regulations (ITAR) system. The new treaty enables approved defence items to be traded licence-free.

Though the bill affects trades in both directions, Australia stands to benefit more given the comparative size of the US defence market.

Australian IT companies are also set to benefit as the treaty extends the new relationship into cyberspace, building on the Joint Statement on Cyberspace issued by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Australian Foreign Affairs Minister Kevin Rudd in September 2011.

A Defence Department spokesperson told the *Sydney Morning Herald* that the treaty would help eliminate delays caused by having to wait for authorisation.

"Australian companies will be able to take advantage of increased commercial opportunities through the ability to respond to requests for bids in

TROOPS

End of an era as British troops leave Germany

The UK Government has confirmed that the 20,000 British soldiers stationed in Germany are to be redeployed by 2020, with the first 1,800 troops to depart in January 2012.

The British Army has maintained a presence in Germany since the end of the Second World War, initially to ensure the stability of post-war Germany and then to prevent further encroachment from the East as the Cold War began.

The withdrawal was set out in the October 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, and the end date was brought forward by 15 years from the original target as part of the recent military budget cuts.

Two of the returning units will be based in former RAF bases at Cottesmore in Rutland



and Kinloss in Scotland, which are

being redeveloped for the purpose after they were closed to save money.

The military bases in Celle and Munster will be returned to the German authorities, and the Rheindahlen Military Complex will close. The fates of the other German facilities in British possession are yet to be decided.

It is estimated that the redeployment of 43,000 individuals, including troops, civilian support staff and families will save £250 million a year. It will also pump £650 million into the British economy as money will be spent in the UK rather than overseas.

the US where the contract documentation contains controlled unclassified technology information," the spokesman said.

BUDGET

UK defence cuts led to increased spend

The UK's National Audit Office (NAO) has issued a report showing that efforts to reduce defence spending have contributed to an increased spend of £466 million on the 15 biggest defence projects in 2011.

Taking previous cost growth into account, these projects now cost £6 billion more than their original estimates.

Decisions made by the Ministry of Defence (MoD), including programme delays, were one of the biggest contributors to the cost increases. The decision made in the Strategic Defence and

Security Review to slow the Astute submarine programme by 28 months to keep production running until the 2028 in-service date for the replacement of the nuclear deterrent submarine added £200 million to the forecast cost in 2011.

The forecast time to deliver the projects increased by a total of 30 months during 2010-11, bringing the total delay on all 15 projects to 26.8 years. This included the Watchkeeper unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) programme, which was delayed by 12 months, largely due to its manufacturer Thales being unable to meet the agreed delivery schedule.

Despite a £10.6 billion (11.4%) increase in the difference between the approved and forecast costs of all projects approved since 2000, the NAO concluded the MoD had

prevented a further potential increase to £19.4 billion (20%) by reducing the amount of equipment it intended to buy.

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, said: "The Ministry of Defence has been hampered by a legacy of poor planning and performance on some of its previous projects, and the resulting cuts and delays do not add value for money.

"But it is welcome news that the department has finally accepted that the financial position is serious, and is actively working towards balancing its books in the longer term."

EQUIPMENT

Japanese Air Force plans massive overhaul

The Japan Air Self-Defence Force (JASDF) grounded its entire fleet of 202 F-15 fighter

aircraft in October 2011 after a fuel tank and parts of a mock missile detached and fell from one of the aircraft mid-flight. The JASDF previously grounded all F-15s in July 2011 after a fighter crashed in the sea off eastern China.

The incidents involving the aircraft, which dates back to 1976 and provides the core of Japanese air defence, serve to illustrate Japan's concern over its aging fleet. Its other main fighter jets are F-4s and F-2s, making a total fleet of 362.

Japan is also being overtaken in terms of technology by its neighbours Russia and China, which are investing significantly in their air forces through the purchase of new stealth fighters. Japan is now set to join them with the announcement of a multibillion-dollar JASDF overhaul.

Michael Auslin, a Japan security expert with the American Enterprise Institute think tank, told Associated Press: "The JASDF is on the edge of becoming a major tool of power projection. With its fighter selection process, it will signal whether it intends to be qualitatively competitive with leading air forces around the region over the next generation."

Japan had originally planned to acquire the Lockheed Martin F-22 Raptor, but the US Congress opposed selling it overseas because it contains sensitive technology.

Other likely candidates for the estimated \$8 billion contract are the Lockheed Martin F-35, Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet and the Eurofighter Typhoon.

Delivery of the aircraft is scheduled for 2016.

EQUIPMENT

Lockheed to upgrade USAF F-22 Raptor fleet

Lockheed Martin has received a contract modification to

provide system upgrades for the US Air Force (USAF) F-22 fighter fleet.

The \$7.4 billion contract extension was awarded under the original Raptor enhancement development and integration contract secured by the company in 2002. Under the contract, the company will provide system upgrades, added capabilities and enhanced performance for the F-22 weapon system.

The radar-evading F-22 Raptor has been frequently grounded over a number of safety concerns related to the aircraft's oxygen system.

Currently, the USAF has 172 F-22 Raptors in its fleet and has plans to build a total of 187 jets.

The HQ Aeronautical Systems Center ASC/WWUK, Fighter Bomber Directorate, Wright Patterson Air Force Base, Ohio, US, will be the contracting activity.

TECHNOLOGY

South Korea claims world's fastest UAV

South Korea has unveiled what is claimed to be the world's fastest unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV), a remote-controlled aircraft with tilt rotors and vertical take-off and landing (VOTL) capability.

The yet-to-be-named 5m-long UAV, which has been developed jointly by the Korea Aerospace Research Institute (KARI) and the Ministry of Knowledge Economy (MKE), has a wingspan of 23ft and can cruise at a speed of 400km/h. By comparison, the USAF Predator UAV has a maximum speed of 217km/h.

MKE Key Industrial Policy Director General Nam Ki-Man said: "It can also be used as the platform for a personal air vehicle that is capable of door-

to-door operations without needing a runway."

KARI chief Park Kyun-je said the company had completed the UAV's research and development programme and would now move on to conduct flight performance tests to check on sensors for collision avoidance, maximum speed and flight duration.

The air vehicle is still in the developmental stages and is expected to be ready by early next year, with mass production less than three years away.

TECHNOLOGY

New sensors to track suspects by heartbeat

The US Department of Defense's research arm, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA), is developing a new sensor that will be capable of tracking a suspect by heartbeat alone.

The new sensor system, known as Biometrics-at-a-Distance, will use electrocardiography to track a suspect's individual pulse and requires no physical contact or line-of-sight.

The system has been designed to penetrate walls, floors, doors and even concrete to track up to ten different targets in crowds at a distance of over 10m.

The US Department of Defense has plans to deploy the technology primarily on the battlefield to enable troops to identify terrorists or insurgents while performing missions, particularly in cluttered urban areas.

The device can also be used for non-military applications, including monitoring patient health and conducting search and rescue operations in the aftermath of disasters such as earthquakes or floods.

EQUIPMENT

Laboratory develops submarine escape suit for Indian Navy

India's Defence Bioengineering and Electromedical Laboratory (DEBEL) has developed a submarine escape suit (SES) for use by the Indian Navy.

The suit was designed to serve as protection for submariners escaping abandoned vessels or during submarine-related catastrophes from up to 100m below the surface.

The neoprene-coated nylon fabric dry escape suit is fitted with breathing apparatus and anti-mist, unbreakable polycarbonate clear vision goggles. Air pockets in the suit ensure the submariner remains upright while floating on the surface of the sea.

The breathing apparatus lasts for two-and-a-half hours, enabling surfacing submariners to rest for a minute after every 2-3m of ascent to prevent decompression sickness, nitrogen narcosis and oxygen toxicity. Around 255 of the SESs are planned to be inducted in 2012. ■

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