



Schiebel completes sea trials

Austrian UAV developer Schiebel announced in November that its Camcopter S-100 UAV system had successfully completed a series of flights from an Indian Navy offshore patrol vessel in the Arabian Sea.

The company said that the trials represent another big step in the growth of the rotary-wing system into new roles. The original Camcopter UAV was also trialled for a naval application with the Egyptian Navy.

At the beginning of October, the UAV demonstrated its shipboard capability, completing flights from the helipad of the Indian Navy ship in the Arabian Sea. Take-offs from the deck were done both manually and autonomously, while landings were achieved by flying the UAV autonomously to a waypoint relative to the ship, at a distance of about 50 ft above and 100 ft behind the helipad, from where the final approach and landing were executed.

The weather conditions allowed take-offs and landings at ship speeds between 8 kt and 16 kt in light to moderate sea states, with winds from the north-west of up to

20 kt. The longest flight was two hours, with the UAV flying at altitudes of up to 12,000 ft and performing tasks as far as 25 nm from the ship.

During the trials, the system's ground control station was installed inside the ship's hangar, with the link antennas set up on top of the hangar. An inertial measurement unit for sensing the ship movements for automatic landing and the GPS reference antenna were positioned next to the helipad.

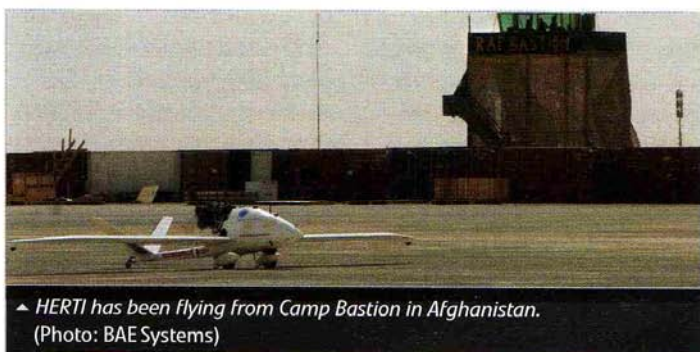
The trials will be noted with interest in the UK, where the Royal Navy (RN) is looking at the rapid acquisition of a UAV capability through a potential urgent operational requirement (UOR). To address the UOR, Schiebel has teamed with Thales UK. The biggest challenge for all of the companies competing for the potential requirement will be to meet the RN's stringent conditions, which include not impeding existing manned helicopter operations aboard its ships.

By Darren Lake, London



▲ Camcopter prepares to land on its Indian Navy host. (Photo: Schiebel)

HERTI deployment to Afghanistan extended



▲ HERTI has been flying from Camp Bastion in Afghanistan. (Photo: BAE Systems)

Further to the BAE Systems announcement of the operation of its HERTI UAV in Afghanistan under the control of the UK's Royal Air Force, Andy Wilson and Martin Rowe-Willcocks, director and head of export programmes, Military Autonomous Systems, respectively, confirmed at

the Dubai Airshow in November that the deployment had been extended beyond its original finish date.

HERTI was deployed as part of Project Morigan. This is a joint initiative between the RAF Air Warfare Centre and BAE Systems that aims to integrate HERTI into UK

forces for a short period in order to develop potential tactics, techniques and procedures for the integration of its capabilities into existing joint manned/unmanned force structures.

Wilson said that while there was only one aircraft and a deployable ground control station (GCS) currently in Afghanistan, operated entirely by RAF personnel, the envisaged deployment would actually see three HERTIs deployed together with one GCS. If an urgent operational requirement for HERTI does arise, Rowe-Willcocks reported that the company currently has five airframes being manufactured.

While sensor feedback includes full-motion video together with both wide and narrow field-of-view

imagery, HERTI has also conducted medium-range stand-off work and has provided 'reach-back' information to the UK. Mission lengths were not revealed – however, previous flights in Australia have stretched to several hours. There was also no comment on its specific tasking, although its images will be contributing to the overall intelligence picture.

According to BAE Systems, HERTI is the first fully autonomous UAV operating under the UK Ministry of Defence Release to Service (RTS). The RTS was achieved in 12 weeks, showing the airworthiness of the system.

By Andrew Drwiega, Dubai, and Darren Lake, Langkawi