

Schiebel's unmanned helo proves its worth

The Camcopter S-100 unmanned air system by Schiebel of Austria has demonstrated its capability from a French navy vessel.

The S-100, operating from the new Gowind class offshore patrol vessel L'Adroit, completed a series of flights and trials earlier this month, the company said.

L'Adroit is believed to be the first ship designed specifically to operate unmanned aerial vehicles.



"With the unmanned airborne system it is possible to gather information without tiring the crew and without exposing the crew toward an enemy and/or bacteriological and/or chemical hazards or also to act as communication relay." said Denis Menage, OPV manager for French shipbuilder DCNS.

The Camcopter S-100 performed 11 flights and 89 deck landings using a harpoon developed by Schiebel. As part of the trials, the S-100 used electro-optical and infrared sensors to identify potential threats such as small boats.

Schiebel said the vehicle demonstrated its potential for surveillance, harbor and coastal patrol, environmental protection, intelligence gathering, drug interdiction and anti-piracy tasks, as well as for search-and-rescue mission support.

"This versatile and very capable UAV can fly a complex mission as planned, without any direct interaction from the operator -- it is fully automatic," a French naval spokesman said. Its positioning systems (a combination of GPS and inertial measurement) guarantees precise navigation and stability, necessary conditions for the accurate landing on a moving platform at sea."

The Austrian company said the Camcopter S-100 onboard a patrol vessel such as the L'Adroit will improve the vessel's surveillance and reconnaissance capability.

"Given the fact that many navies seem to be focusing more on procuring smaller ships for future operations, coupled with the fact that indigenous manned helicopters are often too expensive, opens the door for UAS such as the S-100," said Schiebel Sales Director Neil Hunter.

"This potential capability gap in terms of intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance is where the S-100 fits in."

Schiebel's Camcopter S-100, which is 122 inches long and has a rotor diameter of 134 inches, is a vertical takeoff and landing UAS. It needs no prepared landing and takeoff area or recovery equipment. It operates day and night in all weather conditions and a flight distance of as much as 160 miles.

The aircraft navigates through pre-programmed GPS waypoints or is operated with a Pilot Control Unit.

Missions are planned and controlled via a point-and-click graphical user interface.

Schiebel said the S-100's fuselage is made of carbon fiber and titanium. It can carry a wide range of payload/endurance combinations, can fly to a ceiling of 18,000 feet and, in the standard configuration, can carry a 75-pound payload for more than six hours.

The Schiebel Group has headquarters in Vienna, Austria, and focuses on the development, testing and production of mine detection equipment and the Camcopter S-100.