

CDI/2/22/1

22 Jun 04

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ISTAR PROVISION TO OP TELIC - UK UAV OPERATIONS

ISSUE

1. At the last routine meeting between SofS and CDI, SofS requested advice on ISTAR capability in Theatre, specifically with reference to UAVs.

RECOMMENDATION

2. That SofS notes that:

- We currently have no aerial surveillance capability in theatre - this is a significant capability gap.
- Phoenix performed well through the winter but has now been withdrawn over the summer for temperature reasons.
- Nimrod MR2 is providing some electro-optical photographic recce capability.
- The Desert Hawk mini-UAV is currently non-operational for technical reasons. This is being investigated and Desert Hawk may become operational again later this year.
- The Combined Joint Predator Task Force (CJPTF) will provide some capability at the end of this year. In the meantime, a number of Predator orbits have been assigned to MND(SE). The use of Italian Predators within the CJPTF is being investigated.
- Despite a number of initiatives, this major capability gap is likely to prevail until end 04 with a particular shortfall over the summer months.

- The longer-term solution is the WATCHKEEPER UAV but this will not enter service until 06.

BACKGROUND

3. The provision of a Wide Area Surveillance Capability to enhance ISTAR for Op TELIC has been answered by the provision of a range of solutions. These include: modifying Nimrod MR2 aircraft :

; the provision of a mini-UAV; the

creation of a US/UK Predator Task force. These assets are all part of an overall capability to provide ISTAR and have focussed on providing accurate and timely intelligence to the optimum level of command.

4. The provision of a new UK UAV system has been discounted during this process. These included options provided by the WATCHKEEPER contractors and the loan of a number of Predator systems from the USAF. Detailed work identified that current MoD policy for airworthiness and safety for UAV systems would not allow the use of a new system or the use of Predator under UK regulation in a timely and cost-effective manner.

CURRENT UAV SYSTEMS

5. **Phoenix**. Phoenix was procured in 1988 against a requirement to support operations in North West Europe, predominately as a target acquisition system. The system has subsequently been deployed successfully on operations in the Balkans and Op TELIC during which GOC 1st Armd Div described it as a 'battle winning equipment' as it was successfully employed on wider surveillance roles in addition to providing target acquisition information. The system specification is not designed to operate in the extreme heat of Iraq.

The system has recently stopped operations due to the extreme heat and is due to return to the UK in July. A number of air vehicles have been lost in support of Op TELIC. These include air vehicles lost due to direct action, operational decisions and due to the system operating on the edge of its design specification.

6. **Desert Hawk (DH)**. In order to meet a UOR, DH was procured from the USAF in Dec 03. The USAF has successfully employed the system on operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The system was delivered to theatre in Jan 04 and was initially used successfully to support operator training in Iraq. Although the system was cleared for use by the Theatre Spectrum Manager prior to deployment, the system has subsequently experienced several technical problems

7. **Combined Joint Predator Task Force (CJPTF)**. During 2003-04 an option to form a CTPTF was agreed with the US. Under this arrangement the UK is providing personnel to be trained by the USAF as pilots and sensor operators on USAF equipment and operating under US procedures. Once the UK has sufficient

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personnel trained the CJPTF will be able to provide Predator support to MND(SE), but within the constraints of support to theatre level priority tasks. The CJPTF is expected to be operational by Nov 04 (50%); Jan 05 (90%). In the meantime, a number of Predator orbits have been assigned to MND(SE).

POTENTIAL UAV SOLUTIONS

8. **Watchkeeper (WK)**. The WATCHKEEPER programme is currently assessing bidders' Firm Price proposals for the Demonstration and Manufacture phase. The programme is due to proceed to Main Gate later this year. The current WATCHKEEPER timelines will allow an element of capability to be available from 2006.

9. **Italian Predators**. An option exists whereby the UK may be able to use the Predators that have recently been acquired by the Italians who are currently unable to fly them in Italy due to civil regulations. Under this offer the Predators would be loaned to the USAF, allowing them to be used by CJTF and thus providing a dedicated orbit to MND(SE). We await the initial response from DA Rome and intend to pursue this initiative with some urgency.

CDI

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