

ARMED CARAVANS FOR AFGHANISTAN

LAUNCH CUSTOMER FOR AC-208 ELIMINATOR

The Afghan Air Force previously received 26 examples of the unarmed C-208 Caravan for airlift missions, the final four being delivered in December 2012. One was lost in October 2015 and another damaged in October last year. **USAF/ TSgt Jason Robertson**

THE US IS planning to deliver seven Cessna AC-208 armed intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft to the Afghan National Army. Northrop Grumman/Orbital ATK will be responsible for the project. The Caravans will be operated alongside similar unarmed versions already in service with the Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing in the cargo and utility transport roles. Training of the Afghan crews will be carried out in Fort Worth, Texas.

Known as the AC-208 Eliminator, the Orbital ATK aircraft is equipped as a mini-gunship and is equipped with 2.75in (70mm) rockets and AGM-114 Hellfire missiles and sensors. Additionally, it features electro-optical/infra-red (EO/IR) sensors, target designators, datalinks, and self-protection systems. The project is managed by the US Air Force's 645th Aeronautical Systems Group. **Tom Kaminski**



TAIWAN UPGRADES SKY SWORD II AAMS

THE REPUBLIC OF China Air Force's (ROCAF's) F-CK-1 Indigenous Defense Fighters (IDF) are receiving upgraded Sky Sword II medium-range air-to-air missiles (AAMS). According to local media, the improved missiles are intended to counter the recent arrival of Su-35 and Chengdu J-20 fighters with the People's Liberation Army Air Force (PLAAF).

The National Chungshan Institute of Science and Technology (NCSIST) developed the Sky Sword II in the 1990s. The upgraded weapon

has its range increased from 37 miles (60km) to 62 miles (100km). According to reports in Taiwan, the IDF's Sky Sword II carriage will go up from two to four per aircraft.

In related news, Russian news agency TASS reported on December 22 that a second batch of 10 Su-35s had been delivered to China. Beijing ordered 24 examples of the advanced 'Flanker' under a \$2-billion contract signed in 2015 and the first four were delivered in late 2016. The PLAAF is expected to receive the remaining 10 this year.



Several ROCAF aircraft have received special markings in recent months, including F-CK-1D serial 1427/84-8045 of the Taichung-based 3rd Tactical Fighter Wing, taxiing at Hsinchu Air Base during the annual open day on November 26 last year. **Arnold ten Pas**

US ARMY SEEKS AH-6s FOR FMS CUSTOMERS

THE US ARMY'S Non-Standard Rotary-Wing Aircraft Project Management Office (NSRWA PMO) has issued a request for information (RFI) associated with the possible procurement of as many as 120 Boeing AH-6 light attack and reconnaissance helicopters that would be delivered to Saudi Arabia and other undisclosed Foreign Military Sales (FMS) customers.

They would respectively be delivered in AH-6SA and AH-6I configurations and be equipped with numerous modifications and equipment including an integrated digital video recorder (DVR), AN/AP-39 radar warning receiver, integrated advanced precision kill

weapon system (APKWS) II, and external personnel plank special mission kits (SMKs). The aircraft will be capable of fielding AGM-114 Hellfire missiles, 2.75in (70mm) rockets, 0.5in (12.7mm) GAU-19B machine guns and 7.62mm (0.3in) M134D Miniguns.

In related news, the service is seeking sources that could supply Bell Helicopter Model 407GX, 412EPI, 429 and 505 and Huey II rotorcraft. Purchases could include the production and delivery of up to 150 aircraft for delivery to FMS customers and other government agencies (OGA), over a five-year period from 2019-24. The effort could include other helicopter types as well. **Tom Kaminski**

DELIVERY OF T-50TH TO THAILAND BEGINS

THE FIRST TWO Korea Aerospace Industries (KAI) T-50TH Golden Eagle advanced jet trainers for the Royal Thai Air Force (RTAF) departed for Thailand on January 8.

KAI received two separate Thai orders for T-50THs. A first contract for four aircraft worth \$110 million

was signed in 2015. A contract for another eight jets valued at \$260 million was finalized last year. Once in Thailand, the aircraft will replace the RTAF's current fleet of Aero L-39 Albatros jet trainers. Thailand has an ultimate requirement for a total of 16-18 T-50THs.