

Cubic Gains Foothold in Data Links Market

Cubic Defense Applications has gained a strong foothold in the data links market with the award of two major contracts to provide its advanced technology for unmanned aerial vehicle programs.

The company received an \$11 million contract from Northrop Grumman to supply its data links for the Navy's RQ/MQ-8B Fire Scout Vertical Takeoff and Landing Unmanned Air Vehicle (VTUAV).

This contract, awarded in December 2005, was followed by a \$52 million contract to supply its advanced data link technology for the UK Ministry of Defence's WATCHKEEPER program. The contract was awarded by UAV Tactical Systems, a subcontractor to the Thales UK WATCHKEEPER Prime Contract Management Office.

THE WATCHKEEPER PROGRAM

WATCHKEEPER will provide UK Armed Forces with an Intelligence, Surveillance, Target Acquisition and Reconnaissance capability based on an Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) system and will be a key element of the UK military's Network Enabled Capability. This capability is expected to become operational in 2010.

Cubic's spectrally efficient Tactical Common Data Link (TCDL) and High Integrity Data Link (HIDL) will be employed for this program.

The TCDL will enable WATCHKEEPER to transfer time-critical information from multiple UAVs operating in the same geographical area without mutual interference. The HIDL, developed for command-and-control of UAVs, will provide WATCHKEEPER with a versatile, programmable back-up link.

"WATCHKEEPER is a very important program for us, and we're thrilled to be part of the Thales UK team. This award firmly establishes our foothold in this market and proves that our newest data link technology is ideally suited for today's unmanned aerial vehicle programs," said Rick Lober, senior vice president of Cubic's Communication and Electronics Business Unit.



WATCHKEEPER will provide the UK Armed Forces with 24/7 surveillance capability in all types of weather conditions without the need to deploy troops into sensitive or harmful environments. The unmanned air vehicles that will be used, the WK450, can stay airborne for up to 16 hours each. Cubic's high-speed TCDL provides the wireless connection for transferring data and images from WK450s to control ground stations.

Cubic has issued a subcontract to its UK design and manufacturing partner, Ultra Electronics, to assist in supplying the data links for this critical UK defense program.

RQ/MQ-8B FIRE SCOUT PROGRAM

Cubic will also supply its TCDL for the RQ/MQ-8B Fire Scout VTUAV Program. The data link – consisting of air data terminals and ground data terminals — will serve as the

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wireless connection between Fire Scout and control stations aboard Littoral Combat Ships.

Northrop Grumman is under contract with the Naval Air Systems Command to provide four Fire Scout MQ-8Bs to the Navy. Fire Scout can take off and land on any aviation-capable ship.

The VTUAV possesses the capability to watch for threats within 150 nautical miles of the ground control station, and accurately designate a target and direct weapons to it.

In addition to these ISR and targeting functions, Fire Scout can deliver supplies to troops behind enemy lines without endangering the lives of manned helicopter crews.

“The MQ-8B Fire Scout will be the first Department of Defense unmanned vehicle to incorporate Cubic’s Tactical Common Data Link,” said Lober. “Our TCDL system offers significant technical, size, weight and cost advantages compared to competitive products. We are proud of our selection by Northrop Grumman for the MQ-8B data link system.”

Cubic’s high-speed TCDL will assist in Fire Scout’s reconnaissance, surveillance and targeting missions by providing a large amount of bandwidth – up to 10.71 Mbps – to transfer data from the Fire Scout’s video, laser and infrared targeting sensors, as well as its laser designator/range finder.

“The Fire Scout, which will go operational in 2008, will be quite a workhorse for the Navy, providing ISR and targeting information as well as delivering supplies to troops,” said Robert Kalebaugh, senior manager of Tactical Data Links and Avionics Programs for Cubic.

“Our data link for the Fire Scout will also do heavy lifting from a communications standpoint. TCDL can accept data from many different sources, then encrypt, multiplex,

encode, transmit, demultiplex and route this data at high speed to shipboard workstations for timely exploitation,” he said.

Cubic’s TCDL will be integrated into the MQ-8B Fire Scout beginning in March 2007, with a testing period to follow. The TCDL has received the Department of Defense’s Joint Interoperability Test Command specification compliance verification.

A variant, the Navy Communications Data Link System (CDLS), has been installed aboard the USS Eisenhower, and additional systems are expected to be aboard major large deck ships early next year.

The Cubic data link system is the first of its kind to demonstrate cross-vendor and cross-platform interoperability with legacy systems in use today.

