Thales, Dassault Win Contract for France's New Airborne SIGINT Program – JED, March 2020

– By Richard Scott –

Thales and Dassault Aviation have been jointly contracted to deliver France's ARCHANGE [Avion de Renseignement à CHArge utile de Nouvelle Genération] airborne strategic signals intelligence (SIGINT) program.

Awarded by the French Ministry of Defence's Direction générale de l'armement at the end of 2019, the contract covers the integration of the new CUGE [Capacité universelle de guerre électronique] SIGINT payload on board an initial two Dassault Falcon 8X aircraft to be operated by the French air force (Armée de l'Air). The information collected by the ARCHANGE system will be analyzed by monitoring and intelligence specialists and fed into armed forces databases.

Under the ARCHANGE program, France intends to eventually replace its two Transall C-160 Gabriel SIGINT aircraft with three CUGE-equipped Falcon 8X business jets. A ground-training suite will be installed at Evreux air base.

Developed by Thales, the CUGE payload will be capable of detecting and analyzing both radar and communications signals simultaneously. Key features include multi-polarization antennas, and the use of artificial intelligence techniques to automate data processing.

The ARCHANGE system is planned to enter service from 2025. ♦

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