

ANG Recommends BriteCloud 218 Decoy for Fielding

By Richard Scott

The US Air National Guard (ANG) has issued a fielding recommendation for the Leonardo BriteCloud 218 expendable active decoy (EAD) following extensive trials under the Office of the Secretary of Defense Foreign Comparative Testing (FCT) program. BriteCloud 218 will be designated AN/ALQ-260(V)1 in US service.

Developed by Leonardo's UK-based electronic warfare business, BriteCloud is a compact DRFM-based jammer designed to provide fast jet aircraft with effective end-game protection against advanced RF-guided missile threats and/or tracking radars. After ejection, the BriteCloud decoy searches and locks onto the highest priority threat; the DRFM's coherent response prevents the threat from detecting the deception as the decoy separates, so breaking the target lock and generating large miss distances.

Two fast-jet variants of the EAD have been developed: BriteCloud 55 is a cylindrical store designed for compatibility with standard 55-mm chaff and flare dispensers; while the BriteCloud 218 device adopts a form factor compatible with "square format" countermeasure dispensers such as the AN/ALE-40 and AN/ALE-47.

The FCT commenced in 2019, with the US Air Force and the ANG having previously identified a need for "last minute" expendable electronic decoy round to improve aircraft survivability against RF-guided missile threats. The three-year program, accomplished by the Air National Guard/Air Force Reserve Test Center in Tucson, AZ, has encompassed hardware in-the-loop trials, ground-based system evaluations and flight

trials from ANG F-16 aircraft. Leonardo has been being contracted to provide a number of BriteCloud assets, comprising both operational decoy rounds and lab-based development units.

According to Leonardo, the fielding recommendation by the ANG is one of the final stages of the FCT program and gives the green light to BriteCloud 218 EAD as proven effective and fit for operations.