

SEA Wins Royal Navy Trainable Decoy Launcher Contract

By Richard Scott

The UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has selected Systems Engineering and Assessment (SEA) (Beckington, Somerset, UK) to deliver a new 130-mm trainable soft-kill decoy launcher for Royal Navy (RN) frigates and destroyers.

Under a contract worth £135 million (US\$170.7 million), the company will supply its Ancilia trainable launcher system to meet the requirements of the Electronic Warfare Counter Measures (EWCM) Increment 1a program. EWCM Increment 1a forms part of an overarching Maritime Electronic Warfare Programme (MEWP) intended to recapitalize RN surface ship electronic surveillance, electronic warfare command and control (EWC2), and soft-kill anti-ship missile defense.

RN warships are currently equipped with a fixed-130 mm Sea Gnat decoy launch system designated Outfit DLH. EWCM Increment 1a is focused on the acquisition of a new trainable decoy launcher system that will be capable of deploying both future and legacy countermeasure rounds: the latter stipulation conditions compatibility with the 130-mm caliber Mk 216 and Mk 217 radio frequency (RF) distraction decoys, and the 130-mm Mk 245 infrared seduction decoy.

SEA, a subsidiary of UK-based Cohort Group, was selected for EWCM Increment 1a ahead of Elbit Systems UK, which was offering a customized variant of its Deseaver Mk 4 trainable decoy control and launching system. Safran Electronics & Defense, bidding the so-called Configuration D variant of its New Generation Dagaie System, had been eliminated from the competition at an earlier stage.

Under the EWCM Increment 1a contract, SEA will deliver 38

Ancilia trainable launchers systems for installation on a total of 19 RN ships (six Type 45 destroyers, eight Type 26 frigates, and five Type 31 frigates). Additional systems are being procured to support land-based integration, testing and training activities.

First deliveries are expected in late 2026. Current plans call for an initial operating capability (IOC) to be achieved in the third quarter of 2027: IOC is defined as first vessel fitted and ready for tasking.

Each Ancilia launcher is configured with two six-barrel panniers mounted on a stabilized training/elevating platform (supplied by sister Cohort company Chess Dynamics). The inboard electronics will be largely common with a control system technology refresh already being developed by SEA for Outfit DLH under a contract announced in October 2022.

The wider MEWP program also encompasses the Maritime Electronic Warfare System Integrated Capability (MEWSIC), which is delivering a new wideband digital radar electronic support measures sensor and an EWC2 subsystem to 21 RN ships. A Babcock-led team that includes Elbit Systems UK and QinetiQ was in late 2021 awarded a £103 million (US\$130 million) contract by the MoD for MEWSIC demonstration, manufacture, integration and in-service support. The EWC2 functionality resident in MEWSIC will manage the trainable decoy launcher being acquired under EWCM Increment 1a.