

SNC to provide RAPCON-X aircraft to Finnish Border Guard

By Richard Scott

Sierra Nevada Corporation (SNC)(Sparks, Nev.) has been selected to supply two RAPCON-X airborne intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) aircraft to meet the needs of the Finnish Border Guard's MVX program.

Under a \$170 million contract awarded on June 27, the company will deliver a pair of RAPCON-X-configured Bombardier Challenger 650 aircraft to meet the MVX mission requirement. As well as the aircraft and their mission systems, the contract also covers training, technical support for commissioning and initial spares.

The MXV aircraft, which will replace the Finnish Border Guard's two ageing Dornier 228 surveillance aircraft that were procured in 1995, will be used to monitor land borders and territorial waters, with a particular focus on the country's eastern border with Russia. Other tasks will include search and rescue, monitoring and identification of ships in the Baltic Sea and surveillance support for maritime pollution events and pollution response operations.

Nine bidders were initially shortlisted by the Finnish Border Guard in 2022 to bid for the MVX program. Based on preliminary offers, four companies – SNC; Field Aerospace, also offering a Challenger 650; L3Harris, proposing a Falcon 2000LXS; and ST Airborne Systems, bidding with a Textron Cessna Citation Longitude – were in April 2023 downselected to develop more detailed bids. SNC was one of two contractors subsequently invited to participate in a final tender stage.

The RAPCON-X airborne ISR solution is designed using model-based systems engineering so as to offer the ability to rapidly engineer modifications. An open architecture mission system is designed to significantly reduce the time required to integrate new systems and add capabilities.

Neither SNC nor the Finnish Border Guard have released details of the RAPCON-X mission suite baselined for the MVX program. However, the sensor fit is expected to include a maritime search radar with imaging modes, an electro-optical/infrared system, and a signals intelligence suite.

SNC will undertake work on the RAPCON-X aircraft from its integration center in Hagerstown, Maryland. The aircraft are planned to enter service with the Finnish border Guard in 2026 and 2027.

As a side note, the MVX program name comes from the Finnish Border Guard's aircraft naming convention. The first patrol aircraft in the Finnish Coast Guard (the Border Guard's predecessor) received the civil registry code OH-MVA. This next aircraft received OH-MVB, and so on. The two new aircraft will receive the codes OH-MVX and OH-MVY, respectively.