UK Lifts Veil on EREBUS DAS Flight Testbed

By Richard Scott

The UK Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (Dstl) has unveiled a new airborne test platform supporting the development and test of sovereign air survivability equipment.

Known as the EREBUS UK DAS Flying Testbed, the **QinetiQ**-operated Beechcraft King Air 350ER light twin provides a platform to enable the testing of defensive aid systems (DAS) in real-world flight conditions prior to integration into frontline aircraft. The aircraft has been developed for the Team Pellonia partnership, with first flight tests completed in October 2025.

Team Pellonia was established in 2022 as a joint government/industry enterprise to deliver DAS systems for UK armed forces' air platforms, while at the same maintaining core sovereign intellectual and industrial capability, and contributing to exports. Team Pellonia brings together resources and expertise from the Royal Air Force, Defence Equipment and Support, **Dstl**, **Leonardo UK**, **Thales UK** and **Chemring Countermeasures UK.**

Integrating DAS onto the host air platform is the most expensive part of DAS rollout. According to Dstl, the EREBUS testbed reduces these costs "by enabling faster and smoother development, and testing of full platform capabilities without having to take military aircraft away from the frontline."

DAS equipment is housed in a removable pod mounted beneath the King Air 350 fuselage. Systems fitted to EREBUS include the Elix-IR infrared threat warning system (Thales UK); the Miysis directed infrared countermeasures system (Leonardo UK); the Modular Advanced Platform Protection System DAS controller

(Leonardo UK); and the SAGE radar warner/electronic support measures system (Leonardo UK). As well as reducing integration risk, the flying testbed will also support optimization of DAS configurations for maximum protection, supporting spiral development to enable rapid upgrades, and scaling capability to support front-line users.

Dstl said that EREBUS is already attracting interest from NATO and European partners. This may enable the UK share development costs with NATO allied in the future.