



## NEW GENERATION OF ELECTRONIC INTELLIGENCE IN ARMÉE DE L'AIR

On 28<sup>th</sup> February, French Ministry of Defence declared that it had chosen *Dassault Aviation-Thales* consortium as the contractor for three signal intelligence aircrafts for the French Armed Forces that would replace the long-serving Transall C-160 Gabriel aircrafts. During the period between 2025-2027, one aircraft per year will be delivered within the framework of the Universal Electronic Warfare Capability Programme (fr. *Capacité Universelle de Guerre Electronique*, CUGE). CUGE is an integral part of a wider programme concerning the development of electronic warfare support measures for different military branches constituted in the 5-year development plan of the French Armed Forces "Projet de Loi Programmation Militaire 2019/2025". Within the consortium, *Dassault Aviation* will construct the airframes of the aircrafts, whereas *Thales* is committed to producing electronic and reconnaissance equipment for the aircrafts.

The following proceeding manifests an interesting example as another case of adaptation of the civic aerial platform for the needs of the military – a trend that is clearly visible in the case of reconnaissance as well as maritime patrol aircrafts. Most of the states which decided to implement such kind of aircrafts, tend to choose between two separate solutions: i.e. business jets (as the French trijet aircraft Falcon 7X/8X which can be seen on producer's visualisation) or military light turboprop transport aircrafts. The latter in many cases, derive from civil aviation (where they operate as aircrafts for local communication), for instance CASA C-295 used by Polish Air Forces. **Technical qualities such as long range, ceiling (which increases the operational range of reconnaissance systems) and the working load limit (which increases the combat radius of the tactical intelligence system) are the main advantages of business jets. In the case of turboprop aircrafts, better adaptation to difficult conditions as well as lower exploitation costs can be listed among the advantages.** However, what might seem to be arguable is the speed. On the one hand, low minimum speed might be considered an advantage in completing reconnaissance missions, yet on the other hand, higher cruising speed increases the survivability of the aircraft and reduces the time necessary to reach the patrol area.

This case should also be examined in terms of the unification efforts of the fleet – French Air Forces use a whole range of similar class jets produced by Dassault Aviation. **Such unification can work in two separate ways: with the jets used by the units mainly responsible for VIP transportation or with turboprop aircrafts which are commonly used as light transport as well as maritime patrol aircrafts.** This is what is happening in France right now, where the former are used as dispositional aircrafts in the Air Forces and reconnaissance aircrafts in the Navy, whereas the latter are used as transport carriers in Armée de l'Air and maritime patrol aircrafts in Marine Nationale.

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## POLISH POINT OF VIEW:

In April 2016 the Armament Inspectorate launched a new analytical-conceptual phase in order to acquire three aircrafts with similar characteristics within the scope of the Płomykówka Programme (air reconnaissance capabilities). French experience in this field can serve as a good example to Poland.

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Another important issue which should be taken into consideration is **the push for unification of the possessed military air fleet. Such move both, simplifies the operations and reduces the costs of exploitation – a fact that becomes very important in terms of small orders.**

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At present, aside from the Russian Federation, only five other European states operate electronic reconnaissance piloted aircrafts, i.e. Great Britain, Sweden, Spain, Norway and France. **Effective implementation of the Płomykówka Programme will allow Poland to join this elite club.**

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Dedicated, specialist reconnaissance aircrafts are capable of fulfilling different tasks at strategic, operational as well as tactical level. **Furthermore, such aircrafts can operate simultaneously within the air, land and naval forces, which makes them one of the most universal means of reconnaissance in modern-day battlefield. Such aircrafts can also be used along different types of UAV's, yet in comparison to them, reconnaissance aircrafts are less dependent on ground control and can carry a wider range of reconnaissance systems.** Moreover, compared to naval and ground based platforms, systems installed on aerial platforms demonstrate a greater range, which to a lesser extent is constrained by limited radar horizon. For those reasons, an increasing number of countries make the decision to purchase this kind of platforms, and the region of South-east Asia in one of the best examples of such trend.

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Based on:

- Projet de Loi de Programmation Militaire 2019/2025, Ministère des Armées;
- L. Barnier, La France lance le programme d'avions de renseignement CUGE, Journal de l'Aviation;
- <http://iu.wp.mil.pl/>, Armament Inspectorate, Ministry of National Defense of the Republic of Poland.