PRESS RELEASE
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Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP):
Advanced electronics partners zero in on joint project delivery set-up

The three nations’ sensing and protection leads are close to agreeing a commercial and operating arrangement to deliver the new combat aircraft’s on-board electronics

At the DSEI exhibition in London, the industry champions for defence electronics from the UK, Italy and Japan have announced that they are working towards agreeing a joint project delivery set-up for GCAP’s ISANKE & ICS domain (Integrated Sensing and Non-Kinetic Effects & Integrated Communications Systems).

The companies, Leonardo UK representing the UK, Mitsubishi Electric representing Japan and both Leonardo and ELT Group representing Italy, are assessing a number of alternative operational and commercial models. The partners have identified that a joint project delivery set-up will be the most efficient and effective way of delivering the programme at pace, as well as ensuring freedom of action and modification for all three nations.

This latest development follows the signing of an ISANKE & ICS domain collaboration agreement, announced in March, and moves the partners closer to the creation of a permanent industrial construct. To meet GCAP’s 2035 target, the partners agree that new ways of working will be required and have held intensive discussions to reevaluate legacy programme structures, infrastructure and performance metrics. The objective is to create a transformative new model of international business and technical collaboration that allows for progress at pace.

ISANKE & ICS is the advanced electronics on-board the GCAP combat aircraft, providing the aircrew with mission-critical information and advanced self-protection capabilities. A core reason why the new GCAP combat aircraft is considered next generation, the new concept transitions from the traditional combat air model of separate airborne sensors to instead provide a fully integrated sensing, fusion and self-protection capability. At the same time, the integrated communications system will allow ISANKE to operate as a network across formations of crewed and uncrewed aircraft, as part of each nations’ wider, multi-domain system-of-systems.

In addition to commercial discussions, over the last few months the domain partners have also made significant progress on the technical side of the programme, with the ISANKE & ICS subsystem passing a three nation systems review. As well as virtual working, engineers from Leonardo, Mitsubishi Electric and ELT Group have come together in-person on multiple occasions as the domain has progressed towards the systems review stage. This key gate in the ongoing joint concept activity means that the partners have agreed on the high-level design of the ISANKE & ICS sub-system: what will the key blocks of the system be, where will they sit in the aircraft and what will they do.

Passing this gate has provided more certainty for the direction of research and development work and supports the new combat aircraft going into service in 2035. At the same time, all of the partners have progressed the development of a number of critical underlying technologies, including in the fields of radar, electro-optics and electronic warfare. The collaboration has also laid the groundwork for aligning the firm’s
journeys of digital transformation as they prepare for more intensive joint engineering on across national borders in a secure manner.

The ISANKE & ICS domain partners represent some of the most skilled and cutting-edge engineering work in their three respective countries. Together, the partners expect to inspire and train a new generation of engineers and businesspeople who will be able to meet the challenging requirements of the next 50 years and beyond in the defence sensing and communications domain.

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*U.S. dollar amounts are translated from yen at the rate of ¥134=U.S.$1, the approximate rate on the Tokyo Foreign Exchange Market on March 31, 2023

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