

Finmeccanica: Alenia Aeronautica signs agreement with Bulgaria for five C-27J aircraft and options for three more

---

Bulgaria's ministry of defence today signed an agreement to supply five C-27Js, the tactical military transport aircraft produced by Finmeccanica subsidiary Alenia Aeronautica and the US company Lockheed Martin. The agreement includes options for a further three aircraft. This concludes the talks that began in April last year with the Bulgarian government's selection of the C-27J to replace the country's fleet of Soviet-built An-26 aircraft.

The C-27J will be used to transport troops and materials not only at home but also abroad, as part of operations for NATO (of which Bulgaria has been a member since April 2004). It will give the Bulgarian armed forces, which are currently upgrading their equipment, an aircraft that fully meets the interoperability standards demanded by NATO.

The first plane is scheduled for delivery in June 2007, and the rest will be delivered at a rate of one per year. The C-27J is the most advanced programme of next-generation tactical military transport aircraft available.

In addition to Bulgaria, the Italian and Greek air forces have also ordered 12 planes each. In the United States, Alenia Aeronautica is in talks to provide the C-27J as part of the US military's programme to upgrade its tactical airlifter fleet, while in Canada, it will bid for contracts to replace the country's search and rescue fleet. Finland, Australia, Taiwan, Ireland, Malaysia and Saudi Arabia, as well as new NATO members such as the Czech Republic, are also evaluating the C-27J.