FRANCE ORDERS THIRD REAPER SYSTEM

News / Manufacturer

France has ordered the third General Atomics Aeronautical Systems MQ-9 Reaper unmanned air system to bolster its growing fleet of the type, which is operating in the Sahel-Saharan strip in Africa.

Ordered through the USA's Foreign Military Sales programme, the third system – consisting of three aircraft – will be delivered in 2019, following the transfer of the second system during 2016.

An initial urgent order for two unarmed Reapers was made in June 2013, and in August that year a letter of offer and acceptance for 16 Reapers and eight ground control stations worth some $1.5 billion was agreed by the Pentagon. The first Reaper system entered service in December 2013, followed by its deployment to Africa in January 2014.

France's DGA defence procurement agency says that planning for the 2014-2019 period will see the provision of four systems, totalling an expected 12 aircraft.

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US Air Force

France's Reapers are replacing the Airbus Defence & Space/Israel Aerospace Industries Harfang UAV that the nation has operated in Afghanistan, Libya and Mali.

Paris also is participating in a pan-European effort to develop a medium-altitude, long endurance UAV, alongside Germany and Italy. In May 2015, the three governments signed a declaration of intent to carry out a definition study on the future platform, which had been lobbied for by Dassault Aviation, Airbus Defence & Space and Finmeccanica.

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