

BAE Systems Secures Major Mine Neutralizer Contract with U.S. Navy



BAE Systems' Archerfish mine neutralization system. BAE Systems

LONDON – BAE Systems has been awarded a contract worth up to £87 million by the U.S. Department of Defense to manufacture and deliver Archerfish mine neutralizers for the U.S. Navy.

This is the fourth consecutive Archerfish contract awarded to BAE Systems since 2003 and will see the company deliver to the U.S. Navy over the next seven years.

Archerfish is a remote-controlled, underwater mine neutralizer which can be launched and operated from a surface ship, helicopter or an unmanned underwater vehicle (UUV). Its fiber-optic data link relays real-time, high resolution, low-light video and high-frequency sonar pictures of targets of interest from its on-board sensors. The design reduces the time it takes to identify and neutralize targets, meaning clearance missions can be completed more quickly. Archerfish also protects personnel by eliminating the need to put divers into the water.

Archerfish is used by the U.S. Navy's MH-60S Helicopter squadrons (AN/ASQ-235) as part of the Airborne Mine Neutralization capability, deployed from the Littoral Combat Ship.

Under the new contract, Archerfish will continue to support the U.S. Navy in live mine clearance operations and also provide capability to conduct training exercises between now and 2027.

The contract also includes the supply of fiber optic spool kits, support equipment, surveys, repairs and program management and support, which will be provided by the Archerfish project team based in Portsmouth, U.K.

Dr Brooke Hoskins, Director of Products and Training Services for BAE Systems' Maritime Services business, said, "This contract builds on our strong partnership with the U.S. Navy which has seen BAE Systems supporting its minesweeping operations for almost two decades. Archerfish not only helps to keep sailors safer, it also reduces the number and cost of mine clearance missions. Its world-leading capability and outstanding service with the U.S. Navy makes Archerfish a highly attractive proposition to other major naval forces around the world."

Developed by BAE Systems under its own investment, Archerfish draws on the company's extensive expertise in underwater effectors. Archerfish uses a flexible, open architecture command and control system that can be operated on its own or integrated into a higher-level command management structure. Wireless communications mean it can be deployed remotely.

Investments continue to be made to enhance Archerfish to meet future mine countermeasure challenges and reduce the through-life cost of the system. Innovative fusing will allow it to be recovered and reused and an automatic target recognition function is being developed that will allow concurrent multi-shot Archerfish operations, enabling mines to be neutralized in waves.

Archerfish is manufactured in the United Kingdom at BAE Systems' Broad Oak facility in Portsmouth, Hampshire, and Hillend facility in Dunfermline, Fife. The contract with the U.S. Department of Defense secures 30 highly skilled jobs in BAE Systems in Portsmouth and Fife and further jobs in the U.K. supply chain.