

First Heliborne AOEW Pod for Navy Expected in Late 2019

WASHINGTON – Lockheed Martin expects to produce the first engineering development model (EDM) of a heliborne electronic warfare pod by late 2019, a company official said.

Orders for materials for the ALQ-218 Advanced Offboard Electronic Warfare (AOEW) pods began last month, Joe Ottaviano, director of electronic warfare programs at Lockheed Martin Rotary and Mission Systems, told reporters Nov. 28 at the Association of Old Crows convention.

The AOEW pod is designed to be taken aloft by an MH-60R or MH-60S Seahawk helicopter and serve as an offboard electronic attack system to counter anti-ship cruise missiles. The helicopter provides power and mobility for the pod, but the pod's operation is independent of the helicopter crew and linked to the SLQ-32(V)6/7 shipboard electronic warfare system.

"It's bringing capability that hasn't been brought before," Ottaviano said, who noted that testing will be a challenge because of the novelty of the capability. "It is designed to be autonomous or [alternatively] work with the fleet."

He said Lockheed Martin expects to roll out the first AOEW EDM in late 2019. The system completed its critical design review in June. The company has been awarded a contract for six EDMs. Initial operational capability is planned for the 2020. Additional pods are expected to be ordered in a low-rate initial production order in the 2021-2022 time frame.

The pod has successfully completed a fit check on the MH-60 helicopter and can be attached to either side of the helicopter.

“How to get all of this capability in a very small pod was a challenge,” Ottaviano said, noting that the pod “generates a lot of heat” and has no supplementary cooling system.