

News story: Multi-billion-pound deal for early warning radar aircraft

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson has signed a \$1.98Bn deal to purchase five E-7 aircraft.

The E-7 fleet will replace the current Sentry aircraft and ensure the continued delivery of the UK's Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) capability.

Named "Wedgetail" by the Australian Department for Defence, the E-7 aircraft can fly for long periods of time and manage the battlespace from the sky.

Defence Secretary Gavin Williamson said:

The E-7 provides a technological edge in an increasingly complex battlespace, allowing our ships and aircraft to track and target adversaries more effectively than ever. This deal also strengthens our vital military partnership with Australia.

We will operate state-of-the-art F-35 jets and world-class Type-26 warships, and this announcement will help us work even more closely together to tackle the global threats we face.

Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

Today's announcement about the procurement of five E-7 'Wedgetail' Airborne Early Warning and Control aircraft is excellent news for both the RAF and wider Defence. This world-class capability, already proven with our Royal Australian Air Force partners, will significantly enhance our ability to deliver decisive airborne command and control and builds on the reputation of our E3D Sentry Force.

Along with Defence's investment in other cutting-edge aircraft, E-7 will form a core element of the Next Generation Air Force, able to overcome both current and future complex threats.

The new fleet will be able to track multiple airborne and maritime targets at the same time, using the information it gathers to provide situational awareness and direct other assets such as fighter jets and warships.

The E-7 is a proven aircraft that is currently in-service with the Royal

Australian Air Force and has been used on operations in the battle against Daesh in Iraq and Syria.

The E-7 is based on a standard Boeing 737 NG airliner modified to carry a sophisticated Northrop Grumman active electronically-scanned radar. This can cover four million square kilometres over a 10-hour period.

Modification of the aircraft will be carried out in the UK, sustaining over 200 highly skilled jobs at Marshall Aerospace and Defence Group in Cambridge, and there will also be opportunities for British suppliers to be involved in future training and support arrangements.

This announcement builds on a growing military capability and industrial relationship between the UK and Australia, after the Australian government selected the British Type 26 design for its future frigate.

E7 infographic. RAF Copyright.