

Leonardo and Hensoldt sign agreement to offer secure ‘Mode-5’ friend-or-foe systems to the worldwide market

- **Identification Friend or Foe (IFF) technology allows users to distinguish electronically between allied forces and potential threats, helping avoid ‘friendly fire’ incidents**
- **Leonardo and Hensoldt (formerly Airbus) have already been chosen by the UK MOD to provide their “Team Skytale” Mode 5 IFF solution for over 400 platforms**
- **Leonardo is a leader in the latest and most secure version of IFF, called ‘Mode-5’, providing the technology to UK, Italian and other armed forces worldwide**

Langkawi, 21 March 2017 – Leonardo has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with Hensoldt (the new name for Airbus DS Electronics and Border Security) to offer Mode-5 IFF (Identification Friend or Foe) solutions to customers around the world. This collaboration between two European leaders in defence electronics technology shows how, by joining forces, the team can position itself as market leader for cutting-edge new requirements. The two companies, working together as “Team Skytale”, have already been selected as preferred bidder by the UK Ministry of Defence to upgrade IFF systems on more than 400 land, sea and air vehicles.

IFF technology allows operators to electronically identify friendly forces, distinguishing them from potential enemies. It does this by sending out an interrogation signal to unidentified platforms and verifying the automatic responses that are sent back, effectively a modern-day challenge and password system. Ensuring that ground, air and naval crews can reliably recognise their compatriots is one of the main ways of avoiding ‘friendly fire’ incidents. In 2020, all NATO nations are mandated to switch over to the new, more-secure ‘Mode-5’ version of the technology and other nations looking to operate alongside NATO forces will also need to be able to interact with the new standard. Mode-5 uses the latest cryptographic techniques to avoid the threat of deception by adversaries.

Leonardo and Hensoldt can offer a comprehensive product portfolio and integration expertise capable to satisfy any customer needs and, notably, are the only companies outside of the United States to be able to offer a cryptographic computer or ‘crypto’ that meets the US Department of Defense AIMS 04-900(A) Option B control standard, making Team Skytale’s European solution readily exportable to a wide range of potential international customers. Nations which the team will be approaching include those who intend to upgrade their systems to the new Mode-5 standard to allow inter-operation with NATO forces. Team Skytale will be looking to Europe, the Middle East and Far-Eastern nations as potential customers.

Leonardo has emerged over the last year as an international leader in IFF technology, particularly in modern, Mode-5-compatible equipment such as the M428 IFF Transponder and the SIT2010 Crypto device, and offers a wide portfolio of IFF interrogators suitable for different platform types. In the UK, Leonardo has previously delivered Mode-5 IFF for the Royal Navy’s Queen Elizabeth Class aircraft carriers and the Royal Air Force’s Eurofighter Typhoons, while in Italy Leonardo is providing Mode-5 IFF for the NH90 helicopter. Internationally, the company provides Mode-5 IFF technology for the Saab Gripen-E fighter and other worldwide Armed Forces. Looking at future IFF technologies, the company has already demonstrated reverse-IFF (air-to-ground) capabilities with the Italian Air Force on its Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft and is currently studying the benefits of E-Scan IFF for future Typhoon aircraft.