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Aerosonde wins special operations contract

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US Special Forces Command (SOCOM) selected the AAI Aerosonde to provide intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) services. The mid-endurance unmanned air systems (MEUAS) award, worth up to \$600 million over time, will see AAI operate and maintain the small unmanned air vehicles (UAV) on SOCOM's behalf.

Textron, AAI's parent company, declined to provide additional details, including aircraft type and payloads. However, AAI officials told Flightglobal in January of their intent to bid the contract with a revamped version of the Aerosonde Mk 4.7.

The modified Aerosonde, known internally as 'Aerosonde-G,' weighs 34kg [75lb] and includes a heavy fuel engine with significantly increased power. The aircraft uses the same ground control station as the RQ-7, a system also built by AAI that is widely operated throughout US ground forces.

Aerosonde and two others were selected to fulfill the US Navy's ISR services contract, a similar contractor-owned, contractor-operated contract worth up to \$874 million.

SOCOM was not immediately available for comment, while Textron declined to comment and deferred questions to SOCOM. End



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