The ABU DHABI corvette will be equipped with the Selex KRONOS 3D multi-role radar. (Photo: Selex Sistemi Integrati)

tonnes, and will be powered by two 7,000 kW diesels for a max. speed of 25 knots with an endurance of over 3,000nm at 14 knots. The ship will receive a far more sophisticated and capable mission equipment than fitted onboard the Italian Navy's "Comandanti" class. Selex Sistemi Integrati will provide an IPN-S command and control system, a KRONOS 3D search radar system, a NA-30S fire control system, a SIR-M secondary radar and a MEDUSA MK4B electro-optical system, with a total value of €15 million. The company will also be responsible for the functional integration of the combat system. The UAE is the launch customer for the KRONOS multi-role solid-state 3D radar, designed and developed by Selex Sistemi Integrati based on its experience with EMPAR.

OTO Melara will supply a stealth version of the Super Rapid gun and two MARLIN 30mm weapons stations, worth €2 million, while a partnership of WASS (prime) and Thales Underwater Systems will build an ASW system worth around €27 million.

French Navy Studies MCM Drones

The French Defence Procurement Agency (DGA) has awarded a team of DCNS, Thales and ECA a major study contract that is expected to lead, around 2011, to a demonstrator of a new mine countermeasures solution dubbed ESPADON (*Évaluation de Solutions Potentielles d'Automatisation de Déminage pour les Opérations Navales,* or "evaluation of potential solutions for the automation of mine clearing for naval operations.")

The ESPADON solution will comprise a minehunter, two USVs and autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs). While remaining at all times at a safe distance from the mine field, the minehunter or similar dedicated vessel will deploy and control the USVs, each programmed specifically to operate in mine fields. The USVs, in turn, will deploy AUVs, a smaller and completely autonomous type of subsea naval drone carrying sensors and robotic devices to detect and neutralise naval mines. On completing their mission, the AUVs return to the USVs and the USVs to the mother vessel.

With this programme, DCNS, Thales and ECA will be the first team in the world to evaluate USVs deploying AUVs for full-scale mine countermeasures. The ESPADON study will be shared in such a way as to ensure that each partner contributes its specific expertise in MCM. In addition to acting as the lead contractor to the DGA for the overall project, DCNS is responsible for the USV platform and the interface with the mother vessel. Thales is responsible for the USV, MCM outfitting and the sensor module, comprising an AUV and a towed sonar for mine detection, identification and location. Thales is also responsible for communications between the different components. ECA is responsible for the design and development of the autonomous underwater vehicles, the AUV launch and recovery system and the USV remote control system.

First C-17 For NATO

On 27 July 2009, a ceremony took place at the Pápa airbase in Hungary to welcome the arrival of a Boeing C-17 GLOBEMASTER III transport aircraft, the first of three acquired by the NATO Airlift Management Agency (NAMA) as part of the Strategic Airlift Capability initiative (SAC).

On this occasion, the NATO Deputy Secretary General, Ambassador Claudio Bisogniero joined Hungarian Prime Minister Gordon Bajnai, Minister of Defence Imre Szekeres, as well as high-level civilian and military representatives of the twelve SAC participating nations1 and officials representing structures responsible for the project's implementation.

The Heavy Airlift Wing (HAW) – which will operate the fleet of C17s – was activated during the ceremony, with a symbolic handing of the HAW flag by Minister Szekeres to HAW Commander, Col. John Zazworsky.

In his speech, the NATO Deputy Secretary General said: "Building on the experiences and lessons learned from two decades of operation of another highly successful multi-national capability – the NATO Airborne Early Warning fleet or AWACs –the SAC exemplifies what can be accomplished when nations come together for a common purpose: to acquire, collectively, a capability that would be beyond the means of nations, acting individually. This is the true testimony of Allied solidarity."

In turn, Prime Minister Bajnai expressed his gratitude "... for the confidence placed in Hungary as the host nation for the Main Operating Base for the C-17s," and called the ceremony, which comes ten years after Hungary joined the Alliance, "a very historic moment".

The purpose of the 30-year SAC programme, which will operate independently of NATO's military command, is to collectively create a strategic airlift reach to meet national obligations to the European Union, United Nations and NATO. Primary among those obligations for all the participants is support to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan. The twelve participating nations include ten NATO member countries (Bulgaria, Estonia, Hungary, Lithuania, The Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and the

The US Navy and Boeing formally rolled out the new P-8A POSEIDON Maritime Patrol and Reconnaissance Aircraft during a ceremony at Boeing's manufacturing facility in Seattle on 30 July 2009. Picture shows Chief of Naval Operations (CNO) Adm. Gary Roughead, centre, Washington Gov. Christine Gregoire and senior executives of the Boeing Company in front of the aircraft during the ceremony. The POSEIDON will replace the P-3C ORION as a long-range ASW, AsuW and ISR aircraft. It will maximise the experience and technology of the ORION, but with significant growth potential, greater payload capacity, advanced mission systems, software and communications. Boeing was awarded a contract in 2004 to deliver five test vehicles. This acquisition phase provides three flight test aircraft, one full-scale static loads test airframe, and one full-scale fatigue test airframe. The US Navy plans to purchase 117 production aircraft, with IOC scheduled for 2013. (Photo: US Navy/Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Tiffini Jones Vanderwyst)