

US ARMY ELIMINATES COMPETITOR FROM JCA PROGRAMME

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THE US Army has eliminated at least one company from the USD5 billion competition to provide more than 100 small cargo aircraft for the Joint Cargo Aircraft (JCA) programme.

Lockheed Martin, which offered its C-130J Hercules for the JCA programme, received a letter from the US Army on 28 July stating that the aircraft could not compete because it had not received certification from the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA).

The CN-235, one of two aircraft offered by the joint team of Raytheon/EADS CASA, also reportedly failed to pass the first stage of the army's JCA review process.

The eliminations means the race could be narrowed down to just two competitors. The Raytheon team is offering a second aircraft, the C-295, and a team led by L-3 Communications is offering the C-27J Spartan.

Peter Simmons, a spokesman for Lockheed Martin, said the company disagrees with the army's decision and insisted that the C-130J does, in fact, have FAA certification. Other branches of the US military, as well as air forces in the UK, Italy and other countries, already fly the aircraft.

Lockheed Martin officials will meet with the army in the next few days to discuss the reason for the rejection, and Simmons said the company will have more information at that time.

Raytheon spokeswoman Sabrina Steele said both the C-295 and the CN-235 are "fully compliant" with the JCA requirements, but she said it would be "premature" to comment on whether the two aircraft were accepted in the first stage of the US Army review.

L-3 Communications, the prime contractor offering the C-27J Spartan for the JCA programme, said it was definitely still in the running. The C-27J is not certified by the FAA, but has "equivalent" European commercial aircraft certification, according to spokeswoman Edie Cartwright

The aircraft selected in the JCA competition will deliver cargo in tight, remote areas and unpaved airstrips. The aircraft will replace the C-23 Sherpa, C-12 and other small aircraft now used by the US Army.

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