

## ZODIAC WINS NEW CONTRACT FOR 20 COMMANDO RIBS AND FOUR AIR DELIVERY SYSTEMS

The French Directorate General of Armaments (DGA) has awarded a contract to the Military and Professional division (MILPRO) of Zodiac International for 20 multi-purpose commando RIBs (**ECUME**) and four air delivery systems.

Negotiations for the new contract opened with Zodiac in 2009 when the existing French Navy RIBs (ETRACO) were approaching the end of their working life and were becoming unsuitable for modern fleet requirements. The contract had originally been won in 2006 by an overseas competitor whose prototype had failed DGA and Navy commando tests and had resulted in the contract being cancelled in 2008. The new contract was awarded under European procurement procedures to guarantee stringent and transparent selection processes that take account of all technical, financial, management and delivery criteria.



The twenty **ECUME** are each 9.3 metres long and fitted with twin in-board diesel engines. With an operating payload of 7 tons they will be capable of carrying up to 12 people at speeds up to 40 knots. The new RIBs will meet the needs of French Navy commandos operating in three mission areas including special operations, air-sea operations and activities relating to the protection of the maritime approaches. They will also be used for conducting law enforcement patrols as required. Their deployment capacity has been further enhanced with the inclusion of four air delivery systems (SLE) that enable command and assault versions of the ECUME to be air-dropped into operations.

The **ECUME** has been developed as a multi-mission platform that can be deployed individually or in groups. It is equally suitable for conducting raids from shore or from a naval vessel and can be deployed by OPV, TCD, PCB and FREMM class frigates while carrying the wide range of weapons and equipment used by commandos. A major feature of the RIBs will include advanced radio communications capabilities that will also enable them to operate as a command post for naval operations if required.

The first of the new **ECUME** RIBs is scheduled for delivery to the DGA in November 2012. This will be followed by four months of comprehensive testing with preliminary acceptance anticipated for March 2013. This will be followed by another three months of final evaluation by French Navy Commandos of Lorient so that the launch of the range can be announced in June 2013. The remaining 19 boats will then be delivered from 2014 to mid-2015. The four air delivery systems (SLE) will be built and evaluated in parallel, from mid 2013 to 2015. The Zodiac **ECUME** RIB is being supplied by Zodiac MILPRO (Military and Professional) which is based in Paris and supplies inflatable and semi-rigid craft for professional users such as police, coast guard, special forces, anti-terrorism units, fire teams, the offshore industry and other military users. The boats manufactured by Zodiac MILPRO range from 4m to 12m long and are available in configurations that include inflatable and rigid inflatable boats with aluminium or fibreglass hull designs, inflatable or foam tubes, diesel inboard or petrol outboard engines.