

UK Signals £403 Million Aircraft Program to Replace Tutor Fleet

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The UK Ministry of Defence has announced a new £403 million procurement program aimed at replacing the long-serving Grob Tutor T1 training aircraft. The initiative, known as Project TELUM, is expected to deliver a modern light trainer platform and support infrastructure by 2030, ensuring continuity in basic flight training for the Royal Air Force, Royal Navy, and Army Air Corps.

Project TELUM will cover the provision of aircraft, instructor support, maintenance services, and associated infrastructure. The platform will be used across University Air Squadrons, Air Experience Flights, and elementary flying training pipelines. A formal tender process is due to begin in October 2026, with the MoD indicating a preference for engaging small to medium-sized UK suppliers under a direct award model.

The Tutor T1 has been a mainstay of UK military flying training for more than two decades, used for pilot grading, cadet orientation flights, and recruitment activities. However, with the platform nearing the end of its operational life, the need for a more capable, cost-effective, and sustainable replacement has become increasingly urgent.

According to the Ministry, the new aircraft will be supported at fixed bases and potentially in other locations, depending on operational requirements. The support package will include core engineering, logistics, and instructor services to ensure consistent training availability across the UK.

The decision to proceed with TELUM aligns with broader defence modernisation efforts, particularly in the training and personnel development space. The MoD has emphasised the importance of maintaining a reliable and technologically up-to-date pipeline for developing aircrews, especially in light of future combat air capabilities such as the Global Combat Air Programme (GCAP), which aims to deliver a sixth-generation fighter by 2035.

British aerospace firms, including emerging platforms like Aeralis, have expressed interest in future trainer opportunities. While TELUM is focused on replacing the elementary trainer, it complements a wider

review of fast-jet training and the eventual replacement of the Hawk T1 and T2.

With formal procurement still more than a year away, industry stakeholders will closely monitor how TELUM is shaped and delivered. The project represents a critical step in safeguarding the UK's flying training pipeline while supporting domestic defence industry capabilities.

The new platform is expected to enter service in 2030 and remain in use for at least a decade, with options for extension.