

Thales invests in two new UK-based trials and training centres for autonomous systems

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Today Thales is announcing a major commitment to develop future autonomous and unmanned technology across air and sea by investing in two new UK-based trials and training centres.

Following Thales's successful trials during the Royal Navy's Unmanned Warrior exercise in 2016, Thales is now investing in two trials and training centres based in West Wales and in South-West England to test and develop autonomous systems for both military and civil activities.

Thales will invest £7 million (€8 million) across the two regions, and sustain around 60 jobs in the local areas. There are currently 500 jobs both in Thales and our supply chain supporting current and future autonomous and unmanned systems technologies.

The new £1 million facility in Turnchapel Wharf, Plymouth will be Thales's maritime autonomy trials and training centre. The five year

> Key Points

- Two new facilities in the UK dedicated to the test and training of autonomous systems
- The two facilities will bring an investment of £7m (€8m) and sustain 60 jobs in the local regions, 500 skilled jobs throughout the UK.
- Both facilities are key to Thales's vision of autonomous system capabilities

commitment by Thales secures 20 jobs and the aspiration to continue to grow our footprint. This waterfront facility will provide access to trials areas for development of cutting edge maritime autonomous systems and position Thales at the centre of future maritime autonomy capability. The facility will act as the key maritime integration, test and evaluation centre for the combined United Kingdom and French Maritime Mine Counter Measures (MMCM) Programme.

Central to the growth of Thales's future, Thales has also signed a five year agreement with West Wales Airport (WWA) which will continue to deliver the Watchkeeper programme to the British Army and to expand the innovative test, development and training of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS).

Thales has committed £6 million to the West Wales facility over the next two years, securing 40 jobs both locally and across the UK. Over the past ten years, £10 million has already been invested into the airport and local economy while Thales and the Ministry of Defence have tested and developed Europe's largest UAS programme, Watchkeeper.

The commitment to these facilities builds on Thales's leadership in autonomous systems and strengthens the position of UK industry in this emerging market.

> Notes to editors

Thales offers a range of innovative, highly capable and dependable solutions to detect, identify and analyse threats and act accordingly across land, air and sea. The company is a leader in the fast growing market of autonomous systems, and the global market itself covers an array of different platform sizes, capabilities and options.

Through the combination of autonomous platforms, modular sensors, and mission systems that are being developed for simple integration between remote combat mission systems, Thales is at the forefront of optimising these systems for both land and maritime environments.

Thales in the UK is the Prime Contractor and Design Authority for the Watchkeeper Tactical Unmanned Air System (UAS), which is the largest UAS contract in Europe which has been tested and developed from West Wales Airport since 2004.

Thales is leading a consortium of UK and French companies to develop cutting edge maritime mine warfare capability under the UK/France Maritime Mine Counter Measures programme worth £117 million.

> About Thales

Thales is a global technology leader for the Aerospace, Transport, Defence and Security markets. With 62,000 employees in 56 countries, Thales reported sales of €14 billion in 2015. With over 22,000 engineers and researchers, Thales has a unique capability to design and deploy equipment, systems and services to meet the most complex security requirements. Its exceptional international footprint allows it to work closely with its customers all over the world.

« Investing in these facilities enables the safe test, evaluation and training of autonomous platforms, innovative research and development, as well as the regulations for military and civil applications. These facilities will be central to the growth of Thales's future autonomous capability. »

Victor Chavez, CEO of Thales in the UK

"Whether in the air or the sea, the UK is leading the way when it comes to autonomous systems. Thales' announcement today is yet another example of that, and another way in which this innovation is supporting jobs right across the country."

Harriett Baldwin, Minister for Defence Procurement

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