

A £350M MoD contract to maintain the Royal Air Force's Hercules aircraft will support 500 UK jobs, the MoD announced today. This will help support operations in Afghanistan with greater resilience through continuing maintenance of the fleet.

Hercules are a vital part of the RAF's fleet, carrying troops, supplies and equipment in support of operations around the world. They also perform life-saving medical evacuation missions, transporting injured personnel home from Afghanistan.

The deal with Marshall Aerospace will sustain 500 UK jobs, with the majority based in Marshall Aerospace's facility at Cambridge Airport. Work will also be undertaken by Lockheed Martin at sites in Havant, Stansted and Gloucester, and by Rolls-Royce and its sub-contractor Vector Aerospace in Filton, Hook, Croydon and Brize Norton. Lockheed Martin UK will look after supply chain management and Rolls-Royce will maintain the engines.

This Hercules Integrated Operational Support (HIOS) contract saves the MoD £170M by replacing several short-term contracts with one agreement to provide the maintenance of the whole Hercules fleet until the end of 2015.

Minister for Defence Equipment, Support and Technology, Peter Luff, said: "The Hercules aircraft is a key part of our long-range RAF air transport force and supports thousands of troops on operations across the globe. This new agreement will not only save the tax-payer money but will also ensure the fleet has continued support to maintain aircraft availability, especially for Afghanistan."

Group Captain Nick Cox, Defence Equipment & Support Project Team Leader, said: "The Hercules Integrated Operational Support contract will continue to play a crucial role in maintaining aircraft availability as our Hercules fleet continues to meet the demands of our operations."

Marshall Aerospace is the prime contractor for the 24 year £1.52BN HIOS contract signed in 2006 for engineering support for the RAF's Hercules C130J and K aircraft.