

Airbus drops bid to replace Canada fighter jets

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The Eurofighter Typhoon is out of the running to replace 88 aging Canadian fighter jets

Aerospace giant Airbus announced Friday that it is withdrawing from a Canadian government call for proposals to replace 88 aging fighter jets.

The contract is reportedly valued at a minimum Can\$15 billion (US\$11.4 billion).

The company announced in a statement with Britain's Defense Ministry that the Typhoon fighter presented by the Eurofighter consortium would no longer be among the candidates.

The statement cited two factors for the decision, the first of which was that security requirements from the joint US-Canadian North American Aerospace Defense Command (NORAD) were too expensive.

"NORAD security requirements continue to place too significant of a cost on platforms whose manufacture and repair chains sit outside" the United States and Canada, the statement said.

The new aircraft's central role will be to patrol

North American air space with the US Air Force under NORAD.

Additionally, "the significant recent revision of industrial technological benefits (ITB) obligations does not sufficiently value the binding commitments the Typhoon Canada package was willing to make, and which were one of its major points of focus," the statement said.

Airbus's withdrawal leaves the field open to three other candidates: Saab's Gripen, Lockheed Martin's F-35 and Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet.

France's Dassault Aviation took its Rafale out of the running in November because of technical requirements tied to Canada's membership in the "Five Eyes" signals intelligence sharing group of nations that the company could not meet, sources told AFP.

The Five Eyes group is comprised of Canada, the United States, Britain, Australia and New Zealand.

The defense contractors have until the spring of 2020 to submit initial proposals with a contract award due in early 2022 and delivery expected in 2025.

After a trade dispute with Boeing, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government announced in 2017 that, instead of buying 18 new Super Hornets, it would buy 18 used F-18s from Australia as a stop-gap measure.

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