

Italian navy to launch AW101 early warning operations in March

By: [Craig Hoyle](#) London 19.10.2012

The Italian navy expects to begin flying operational sorties with its AgustaWestland AW101 airborne early warning and control (AEW&C) system helicopters in March, following the recent completion of radar development work by SELEX Galileo.

Introduction of the HEW-784 sensor-equipped aircraft had been delayed to support the addition of an inverse synthetic aperture radar (ISAR) function to assist with the long-range detection of maritime vessels, said Cdr Maurizio Loi, head of the navy's flight operations support office.

Completed late last year, the development and trials work demonstrated the ability to detect surface vessels from a range of up to 300km (162nm) using the ISAR enhancement, said Angelo Aprile, SELEX Galileo's head of capability, Italy.

Four AEW-configured AW101s will be used by the navy as part of a 22-strong fleet of the Anglo-Italian type. Ten have been manufactured in a maritime surveillance configuration, with the other eight roled for maritime assistance tasks.

Already delivered, the surveillance aircraft have until now been used to support anti-submarine warfare training activities. In addition to providing early warning services, they could in the future be employed as command and control assets, for example in support of personnel recovery missions, Loi told IQPC's AEW and Battle Management conference in London on 17 January.

Future development work on the HEW-784 could extend the radar's detection range in ISAR mode, and also add strip and spot modes to its overland SAR function, Aprile said.