

AgustaWestland and Sikorsky set to win out in UK SAR contest

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AgustaWestland and Sikorsky look set to be the big winners in the UK's long-running search and rescue contest as it emerged that none of the shortlisted operators for the 10-year-plus deal, worth up to £3.1 billion (\$4.7 billion), have proposed [Eurocopter's](#) EC175 for the requirement.

Speaking to Flightglobal, François de Bray, marketing manager for the EC175, says the in-development type has lost out to AgustaWestland's AW189. He suggests "political reasons" had driven the decision.

And Laurent Vautherin, EC175 programme director, confirms the aircraft has failed to make the cut. It has received feedback from the operators, he says, although declines to give further details.

In fact, neither the two firms on the shortlist - Bristow Helicopters and Bond Offshore Helicopters - nor CHC Helicopter, which was eliminated from the process in December, had put forward the EC175, instead bidding either Sikorsky's S-92 or the AW189 or a combination of the two.

Eurocopter had promised to invest heavily in its Aberdeen site if it was chosen by the winning bidder. However, its Anglo-Italian rival's offer to use its Yeovil plant to produce SAR-configured variants, including airframes, of the AW189 for the rest of the world seems to have held greater sway with operators.

The winners of the deal, which starts in 2015, could be announced as early as March by the UK Department for Transport