

Canadian training and simulation firm CAE has teamed with American warplane contractor Draken International to offer 16 Douglas A-4 Skyhawks as aggressors for Royal Canadian Air Force CF-18 combat training.

The company is also offering two CAE-owned Bombardier Learjet 35s with electro-optical/infrared sensors and electronic warfare panels for carrying mission pods and towed targets, as part of the realistic combat training environment the Canadian air branch desires.

The company announced its bid for the Contracted Airborne Training Services (CATS) programme and the joint venture with Draken in February, ahead of a source-selection decision due later this year.

CAE Canada vice-president and general manager Mike Greenley shared more details about the company's offer during a media briefing on 24 May on the eve of the CANSEC military convention in Ottawa.



Draken A-4 Skyhawk on show in Ottawa, Canada

The Douglas A-4 Skyhawk first flew in 1954, with 2,960 built through 1979, including approximately 550 twin-seat trainers.

CAE and Draken would provide six single-seat and 10 twin-seat versions as "multi-role combat support fighters" for the Boeing CF-18 training mission, with the 16 aircraft split between Canada's Cold Lake and [Bagotville](#) air bases. One Learjet "medium-endurance aircraft" would be located in Victoria, British Columbia and the other in Halifax, Nova Scotia. The main CAE-Draken contracting office would be stood up in Moose Jaw, Saskatchewan.

Greenley says the training proposal brings together live, virtual and constructive (LVC) elements to simulate realistic, modern enemy aircraft, and the system would be fully developed in Canada.



If successful, the Skyhawk fleet would be upgraded to meet specific Department of National Defence requirements, like adding a satellite navigation-assisted approach system, identification friend or foe (IFF) Mode S transponder and targeting pod. The

Learjets would also carry military-grade IFF transponders.

The Draken aircraft already carry the same APG-66 radar found in many legacy Lockheed Martin F-16s and have been upgraded with modern avionics, similar to the F-16 mid-life upgrade standard.

Using this blended LVC training system, two A-4 aggressors could mimic four or more Russian Sukhoi Su-30 fighters on the CF-18's display screen in training, CAE says.

“We can stimulate that display through constructive simulation through radio links, so it could look like there were four or six aircraft coming from many miles away, even though there’s only a couple of aircraft in the air,” says Greenley. “Or, the type of aircraft in the air could be A-4 SkyHawks, but on their display it might look like an Su-30, or some other type of Russian or Chinese aircraft. [LVC] will allow for much richer scenarios, so this will be the next-generation of this type of capability with R&D in Canada for export [from Canada].”



RCAF CF-18 Hornet

**Royal Canadian Air Force**

Of the Draken team, Greenley notes that the company employs experienced combat pilots and its Skyhawks already support this type of fighter training at Nellis AFB in Nevada for the US military.

“They already provide this service against [Lockheed Martin] F-22s and F-35s, so we have a very strong experience base in our team to draw from as aggressors for fourth and fifth-generation aircraft,” he says. “We’ve delivered a fourth-generation aircraft and have experience fighting against fourth and fifth-generation aircraft, which is a unique capability in the world.”

The competition for the Canadian fighter training programme comes as the Liberal government explores options for replacing the outdated CF-18 Hornet, with options ranging from the American-made Lockheed F-35 and Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet to European types such as the Eurofighter Typhoon and Dassault Rafale. Saab could offer its Gripen fighter as a lightweight alternative.

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