

European Firefighting Amphibian Receives Funding Boost

Tony Osborne March 30, 2026



Credit: Hynaero

ROME—A French aircraft developer has secured €110 million (\$126.1 million) from a European fund to launch the development of amphibious firefighting aircraft.

Hynaero aims to build a European successor to the Canadair CL-215/415 waterbombers widely used across the region to combat wildfires.

The proposed Frigate F-100 will be able fly at 250 kt. and drop 10 tons of water compared with the 187 kt. cruise speed and 6 tons of water that can be dropped by the Canadair and the follow-on De Havilland Canada DHC-515 currently in development.

The funding, announced ahead of the Aerial Firefighting Conference here on March 25-26, will support a 12-month initial concept phase, followed by progression to a preliminary design review around 15-18 months later.

“This is a major step in the program,” David Pincet, one of the four co-founders and president of Hynaero, told Aviation Week on the sidelines of the conference. “We know that the path to maiden flight will be bumpy, but we are patient and resilient, and we are working hard to solve each step, one-by-one.”

Pincet said the investment—provided by an unnamed private fund—marks the final of four development gates required to move into the next phase of the program.

The company has already secured support from France’s Sécurité Civile, which operates the country’s firefighting fleet, as well as industrial partnerships with [Airbus](#) Defense and Space.

Hyanero is also engaged in discussions with Leonardo, Thales, Safran and Turkish Aerospace Industries.



[Airbus](#)' involvement includes around 20 engineers working on a package to optimize the aircraft's design, building on a memorandum of understanding signed last February.

Earlier support also included €7 million from the French government's France 2030 investment program and the Southern French region where Hynaero is located.

Hynaero has begun recruiting engineers and senior staff and signed an agreement to use facilities at the Jean Sarrail Aeronautics Cluster in Istres. The company will occupy part of the former Dassault Mercure assembly hangar there for engineering and final assembly activities.

There are currently around 74 CL-215 and CL-415 aircraft operating in Europe, and Pincet estimates a regional market for around 100 replacement aircraft in the coming years. The aircraft will appeal to government and commercial operators, he said.

Commercial operators are also exploring the potential of offering firefighting services to European and other governments, driven by the increasing global threat of wildfires.

Under current plans, Hynaero will use two prototypes for flight testing, with a first flight targeted in 2030 and entry into service expected in 2032.

Once the Istres facility is up and running, Hynaero plans to produce around 10 aircraft a year by 2035-2036.

Pincet, who previously led Sécurité Civile's aviation operations, said he was motivated to launch the program by the limitations of the aging Canadair design and its high cost, estimated at \$50-60 million per aircraft, and the need for a European-developed capability.

Much of Europe's firefighting aircraft capacity has been sourced from Canada or the U.S., including the Canadair CL-215/415, the Dash 8 Q400 and conversions of Thrush or Air Tractor agricultural aircraft.

Research and development work carried out in 2024-25 has defined the aircraft's architecture, configuration, operational concept and primary certification requirements. Pincet noted that the [European Union Aviation Safety Agency](#) (EASA) has yet to certify an amphibious aircraft.

The Fregate F-100 is being designed with "low technological risk" in mind, using proven, off-the-shelf systems, including an overwing-mounted Pratt & Whitney Canada PW150 turboprop, as used on the Dash 8 Q400.

The main technical risk lies in the proposed fly-by-wire control system, although Pincet said the company could revert to conventional controls if required.

Other design features include large side-mounted sponsons that allow the landing gear to be fully retracted into a waterproof housing, unlike on the Canadair where part of the landing gear and the main wheel are exposed to water on the fuselage side.

Like the Canadair, the Fregate F-100 will scoop while skimming the surface. Pincet claims the aircraft will be able to collect 10 tons of water in the same scooping distance, roughly 500-800 m, that it takes for the CL-415 to collect its 6 tons of water.

Hynaero is also exploring a utility variant of aircraft that would be able to seat 36 passengers or accommodate 6 metric tons of cargo and be able to perform maritime surveillance and search and rescue.

