



Press release - 9 July 2021

MID-LIFE REFURBISHMENT OF ASTER MISSILES

On the 9th of June 2021, Eurosam, the Franco Italian consortium, which is co-owned by MBDA and Thales, signed a contract with OCCAR (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement / Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation) for production of the mid-life refurbishment of ASTER missiles for Italy and the United-Kingdom. It follows the one signed in January 2020 for the French ASTER missiles. All our domestic customers have now ordered the refurbishment of their ASTER missiles in service: the French, Italian and United Kingdom navies, the Italian Army and the French Air and Space force.

The contract was signed at OCCAR premises in France (Paris area).

The refurbishment will be performed during the following years in the respective national maintenance centres: the MBDA premises in Selles-Saint-Denis (centre of France), the CIMA (Centro Interfoze Munizionamento Avanzato) in Aulla, located near MBDA La Spezia site in Italy, and in DMG Gosport, located near Portsmouth in the United Kingdom. The contract for this refurbishment has been an opportunity to implement the latest environmental rules (REACH) in the production process and waste disposal will be managed in factories that have been built at the latest environmental standards.

This contract guarantees the best efficiency of the systems based on ASTER missiles, maintaining the capability to assure the customers' airspace sovereignty, by protecting their territory and population and their troops and fleets in operations.

This signature has taken place after three successful Aster firings performed during the NATO exercise "Formidable Shield 2021" the main air defence and anti-missile exercise, which saw the participation of assets from 10 navies and was held during the second half of May at the MOD Hebrides Range in Scotland, UK. During the Exercise ASTER 30 were successfully launched by the French, Italian and United Kingdom warships, enhancing the position of Aster missile as a major contributor of European defence.

Aster missiles represent the cornerstone of Europe's air defence programmes. For naval-based air defence, they are operational on the latest vessels brought into service by three of Europe's major navies: Italy, France and the United Kingdom. For ground-based air defence, the current SAMP/T configuration with its multifunction passive antenna radar is successfully operated in France and Italy from 2011. Thanks to its 360° capability this system already provides protection of vital assets against omnidirectional threat, large areas well over 15 000 km² at effective altitude well over 20 000 meters (vertical) and distance well over 50km (horizontal).

A new generation of SAMP/T, called SAMP/T NG, has been ordered, earlier this year, by France and Italy, and will be delivered from 2025. The SAMP/T NG will ensure protection against new challenging threats and allow implementation of new operational concepts. This system will notably features a new 360° multifunction radar fitted with a rotating Active Electronically Scanned Array Antenna and an enlarged ASTER family including an enhanced missile: the ASTER Block 1 NT (new technology) with a new seeker and a new computer able to face the new emerging threats. It will enables a radar detection range exceeding 300 km and an intercept range of 150 km.

Aster missiles for naval or ground based air defence systems are also in service with several other armed forces around the world.

The Aster missile family comprises Aster 15 for short to medium range air defense and Aster 30 for short to long range air defense. Both variants are vertically launched and autonomously guided to provide the best means of coping with saturating attacks. ASTER missiles provide ships with an all-round anti-missile and anti-air capability to ensure self-defence and consort protection. In addition, ASTER 30 also provides long range interception capability for area defence.

Note to readers:

Eurosam was established in June 1989 as a joint venture of MBDA and Thales, European leaders in missiles, systems and radars, endowing it with major expertise in terms of solutions for air defense. eurosam is the industrial prime contractor and system design authority for the development, production, marketing, sales and in service support of a range of medium and long range naval and ground-launched air-defense missile systems also known as Future Surface-to-Air Family of ASTER missile systems. These systems were developed under contract from the French and Italian Governments, who in the late 1980s had come to similar conclusions as to their air-defense operational requirements. This cooperation, enlarged to the UK in 1996, has experienced export successes, both in naval and land configurations.

OCCAR (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement / Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation) is an international organisation that achieved legal status in 2011 whose core-business is the through life management of cooperative defence equipment programmes. The organisation was established by means of the OCCAR Convention which is equivalent to an international treaty. The current OCCAR Member States are Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and United Kingdom.

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