

MBDA Welcomes Italy's Participation in the Aster 30 Block 1 NT Programme

Defense-aerospace



A year after France, Italy has committed to the bilateral Aster 30 Block 1 New Technology upgrade, which improves the missile's anti-ballistic missile capabilities for both ground-launched and naval applications. (MBDA photo)

On December 20, OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation) notified to EUROSAM, a consortium formed by MBDA and Thales, the amendment 1 of the contract for the "B1NT" programme.

This amendment embodies the participation of Italy in the programme. It follows the notification of the initial contract under French mandate on December 23, 2015, and the Arrangement of Cooperation, signed in June 2016 by the French and Italian Defence Ministers, laying down the framework of responsibilities and rights of the two countries vis-a-vis the missile to be developed in cooperation, and its multiple applications in land and naval defence systems against air attacks and ballistic missiles.

The "B1NT" programme includes the development by MBDA of the new version Block 1 NT (New Technology) of the Aster missile but also the modernisation of SAMP/T systems currently in service with the French Air Force and the Italian Army.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JG2B-Ot9SL4>



These systems will thus acquire enhanced capabilities, particularly against ballistic missiles, constituting an essential contribution for both countries to the NATO programme in this area.

The Aster 30 Block 1 NT missile development takes into account the key dual requirement (same missile for ground and naval Aster systems), including thus the necessary adjustments to allow the missile to be fired from warships.

Italy has in fact expressed its desire to use the Aster 30 Block 1 NT from its future class of PPA (Pattugliatori Polivalenti d'Altura) offshore patrol vessels.

Speaking about the event, MBDA CEO Antoine Bouvier, stated: "The Italian notification strengthens the Aster programme well beyond the financial and technological contribution. Once again, cooperation in Europe adds up to far more than the sum of its parts.

After the current Aster 30 Block 1, which gave Europe its first defence capability against theatre ballistic missiles, the Aster 30 Block 1 NT will allow to extend this capability to more complex threats and will also deal with the emerging threat of Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles (ASBM)."

The Aster 30 Block 1 NT missile

The Aster 30 Block 1 NT missile evolution consists in a new seeker operating in Ka band, replacing the current Ku band seeker, as well as a new improved weapon controller. This change delivers a significant performance enhancement.

The new missile will be capable of intercepting threats of the entry of the MRBM (Medium Range Ballistic Missiles) domain whereas the current Aster 30 Block 1 deals with SRBM (Short Range Ballistic Missiles) of up to 600 km range and it will also be capable of dealing with missiles with separable warheads.

Launched in 1988 by France and Italy, the Aster family (also known as FSAF – Future Surface-to-Air Family) exists as a ground based air and missile defence system (SAMP/T) in service with the Italian Army and the French Air Force. It is also deployed in its naval versions for the self defence of the French and Italian Navies aircraft carriers and provides the self, local and fleet area defence capability on British, French and Italian frigates and destroyers. The UK, which deploys Aster missiles on its Type 45 destroyers, declared during the Franco-British summit held in Amiens in March 2016, that it is considering the new Block 1 NT version for this class of ships.

Aster systems play an active role in NATO's ALTBMD (Active Layered Theatre Ballistic Missile Defence) in defending allied forces against ballistic threats and, as such, represent a major Franco-Italian contribution to this programme.

Aster systems deployed on "Orizzonte" Italian frigates took part in the No-Fly Zone mission over Libya decided by the United Nations in March 2011. SAMP/T systems operated by the Italian Army are today deployed in Turkey as part of NATO assistance to defend against a possible missile threat coming from the Syrian territory.

With a significant presence in five European countries and within the USA, in 2015 MBDA achieved a turnover of 2.9 billion euros with an order book of 15.1 billion euros. With more than 90 armed forces customers in the world, MBDA is a world leader in missiles and missile systems. MBDA is jointly held by Airbus Group (37.5%), BAE Systems (37.5%), and Leonardo (25%).