



### **France launches Aster Block 1 NT programme**

The French Ministry of Defence has launched the Aster Block 1 NT (New Technology) programme aimed at modernising the SAMP/T ground based air defence system as well as its associated Aster missile (\*). The contract was notified by the French DGA (Direction Générale de l'Armement) to the EUROSAM consortium involving MBDA and Thales on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2015.

This contract provides for the development of a new version of the Aster 30 Block 1 missile, referred to as Aster B1 NT with first deliveries to the French Air Force being expected in 2023. It also covers the modernization of the current SAMP/T system to provide enhanced capabilities particularly against ballistic missiles. These evolutions will enable SAMP/T to further enhance its contribution towards NATO's anti-ballistic missile defence programme.

In the next few months, France should be joined also by Italy whose ground based air defence units are similarly equipped with the SAMP/T system.

For quite some time, the UK, Italy and France have shared a successful cooperation covering ground and naval air defence systems based on the Aster missile. This cooperation was reaffirmed by the signing of an MoU (Memorandum of Understanding) by the three nations on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2015.

(\*) France's Aster programme is led by the DGA with the support of OCCAR (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'Armement), the European intergovernmental organisation for joint armament cooperation.