

14th November 2006

FINAL QUALIFICATION FIRING SUCCESSFULLY COMPLETED FOR MBDA'S ASTER SAMP/T AIR DEFENCE SYSTEM

On 14th November 2006, the third and final qualification firing of the Franco-Italian Aster SAMP/T ground-based air defence system was successfully completed at the French DGA's CELM (Centre d'Essai de Lancement des Missiles) test facility. The firing paves the way for the system's operational evaluation by the French and Italian Armed Forces.

For the firing, all components of the Aster SAMP/T weapon system were tested: the Engagement Module, the ARABEL Radar and Identification Module, a Vertical Launch Unit and the ASTER 30 Missile.

The objective of the test firing was to prove the ability of the complete system to intercept an aircraft under a typical operational scenario. For this firing, the Aster 30 missile intercepted a C-22 target drone equipped with radar jammer.

The trial was a total success with the complete range of test objectives achieved:

- Acquisition and tracking of the target by the ARABEL radar
- Target engagement by the fire control unit
- Launch of the Aster 30 munition
- Updating of target coordinates to the missile in flight
- In-flight target acquisition by the Aster 30 missile's seeker
- Final interception of the target at about 10 km from the launcher.

This firing and other system tests performed at the CELM since the beginning of 2005 have demonstrated the exceptional performance of the Aster SAMP/T air defence weapon and the maturity of the system.

This ASTER 30 firing extends a long list of earlier trials successes with the Aster missile family:

- ASTER 30 PAAMS successful firings on 1st June 2005, 12th October 2005 and 23rd May 2006;
- ASTER 30 successful SAMP/T system qualification firings on 26th July 2005 and 20th December 2005;
- Firing of a salvo of two ASTER 15 missiles from the aircraft carrier *Charles De Gaulle* on May 25th 2005 continuing the 100% success rate of ASTER 15 naval firings since December 2001.

With this final qualification firing success, SAMP/T will now undergo operational evaluation by the armed forces of both France and Italy. During these acceptance trials, due to be carried out over a period of around 16 months, further firings will be undertaken. In parallel, series production will ramp up. The Aster missile is already in series production.

Notes to editors

SAMP/T is a land-based air defence system, incorporating the MBDA Aster 30 missile, designed to protect land forces and sensitive sites and zones from the emerging threats posed by aircraft, UAV's, helicopters and in particular the new generation of stand-off missiles characterised by high speed, increased stealth and manoeuvrability. The Aster modular family of vertically-launched missiles is being developed under the leadership of MBDA within the Franco-Italian FSAF (Future Surface-to-Air Family) programme. Under this programme, France and Italy agreed to develop and produce a family of air defence systems for the armed forces of both countries.

These comprise:

SAMP/T: The land-based medium-range area defence system using the Aster 30 (120km range) missile for the French and Italian armies as well as the French air force. SAMP/T comprises a fire control system based on a multifunction electronic scanning radar and a Vertical Ground Launcher, mounted on Italian Astra/Iveco and French Renault Kerax trucks, capable of firing eight missiles in rapid sequence. Twelve systems are on order for France and six for Italy.

SAAM (Surface-to-Air Anti-Missile): A naval point defence system using the Aster 15 (30km range) missile for the French and Italian navies.

PAAMS (Principal Anti-Air Missile System): A subsequent trilateral agreement signed between France, Italy and the United Kingdom resulted in the development of a third naval air defence system forming part of the Aster family, known as PAAMS (Principal Anti-Air Missile System). PAAMS utilises a mix of Aster 15 and Aster 30 missiles to provide self-defence for the host ship, local area defence of nearby vessels as well the wider defence of the fleet.

With an annual turnover exceeding €3,5 billion, a forward order book of over €14 billion and over 70 customers worldwide, MBDA is a world leading, global missile systems company. MBDA currently has 45 missile system and countermeasure programmes in operational service and has proven its ability as prime contractor to head major multi-national projects.

MBDA is jointly owned by BAE SYSTEMS (37.5%), EADS (37.5%) and FINMECCANICA (25%).

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