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## **MBDA PRODUCES 1000<sup>TH</sup> ASTER MISSILE**

The end of November 2012 marked the achievement of another key milestone in the history of the Aster family of missiles. Not only had all the naval and ground based air and missile defence capabilities been qualified - with the various supplied systems having also entered operational service with their respective domestic and export customers – but significantly, the integration and final assembly of the 1,000<sup>th</sup> Aster missile was also completed at MBDA's Selles-Saint-Denis R&D and production facility in the Centre region of France.

This significant production milestone is further evidence of both the maturity and the success of the Aster family of air defence missiles developed through a major European cooperative programme led by OCCAR on behalf of France and Italy.

Production of Aster started in 2006 at a low rate of five missiles per month. In 2008 this increased to a medium rate of 15 per month. Since 2011, full series production of over 20 missiles a month has been successfully achieved to meet customer delivery requirements. This achievement has been made possible thanks to MBDA's international programme management skills which have served to optimise the involvement of major European defence industry businesses such as Avio, Roxel, Thales, Selex, Sagem and Simmel.

To ensure that the highest standards for all the leading-edge technologies involved were maintained as production was ramped up, MBDA introduced and implemented a quality improvement plan across the entire Aster industrial chain. This plan has been implemented since 2008. Ongoing testimony to the success of this initiative has been provided by the results of the last 22 consecutive firings, all of which were fully successful. In addition to providing a clear demonstration of product robustness, these firings have also provided evidence of Aster's operational flexibility and its unique capabilities with regard to the interception of more challenging current threats, such as those posed by ballistic and supersonic sea-skimming/cruise missiles.

Referring to this production milestone, Antoine Bouvier, Chief Executive Officer of MBDA, said: "I am very proud of the way that MBDA has met both the technology and the industrial challenges presented by such a complex programme that involves different system variants and the cooperation of three countries. We are now providing our domestic and export customers with a highly cost-effective operational capability that is second to none. Such an achievement is thanks to MBDA's global and fully integrated business model as well as to the enlightened programme coordination provided by OCCAR. The continued support of the French and Italian governments has also been extremely influential in ensuring the success story that Aster has now clearly become".

## Notes to editors

OCCAR (Organisation Conjointe de Coopération en matière d'ARmement) is an international organisation comprising Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK whose main activities involve the through-life management of collaborative European defence equipment programmes.

Aster missiles are produced in two variants, Aster 15 and Aster 30. Aster 15 is deployed in the SAAM naval self-defence system. The PAAMS naval air defence system, in service with the French and Italian navies, deploys a mix of Aster 15 and Aster 30 missiles to provide self, local and fleet area defence. PAAMS is also in service with the UK's Royal Navy where it is known as the Sea Viper system. SAMP/T is the ground based air defence system firing the Aster 30 missile that has been delivered to the Italian Army and to the French Armée de l'Air (where the system is known as Mamba).

Aster missile based air defence systems are also in service with navies in the Middle and Far East. Two other naval export customers have also placed orders for Aster systems..

With industrial facilities in five European countries and within the USA, in 2011 MBDA achieved a turnover of 3 billion euros with an order book of 10.5 billion euros. With more than 90 armed forces customers in the world, MBDA is a world leader in missiles and missile systems.

MBDA is the only group capable of designing and producing missiles and missile systems that correspond to the full range of current and future operational needs of the three armed forces (land, sea and air). In total, the group offers a range of 45 missile systems and countermeasures products already in operational service and more than 15 others currently in development.

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

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