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MAJOR OPERATIONAL ENHANCEMENTS MADE TO THE MARTE MK2 FAMILY

MBDA is launching studies with a view to adding two new missile types, Marte MK2 S-A and Marte ER (Extended Range), to its Marte MK2 family of missiles. These two new missiles will significantly increase the operational flexibility of this already highly effective range of anti-ship missile systems. Marte MK2/S-A and Marte ER will in due course be added to a range of missiles which currently includes the helicopter-launched Marte MK2/S and the ship-launched Marte MK2/N.

The first of these, the Marte MK2/S-A, will set the anti-ship weapon standard for all fixed wing light combat aircraft, especially the new generation of Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) now entering service worldwide. In this respect it is ideally suited to the new generation Aermacchi M-346.

Marte MK2/S-A, though representing a significant upgrade, draws on the extensive experience MBDA has gained with the existing helicopter-launched version of Marte. Its predecessor, the Marte MK1/A, has already been validated on the Italian Air Force's MB-339 LCA trainer.

Marte MK2/S-A features new operational capabilities such as all-weather, littoral and blue water and fire-and-forget capabilities. The high subsonic speed missile, which carries out terminal attack manoeuvres to defeat enemy air defences, is also capable of striking opportunistic targets as well.

With Marte ER, MBDA is once again demonstrating its ability to enhance existing technology. Though using mostly the same components and re-using many of the same technologies as the Marte MK2, this new extended range missile features enhancements enabling it to engage enemy vessels well beyond the radar horizon.

The main differences distinguishing Marte ER are evident in its turbojet propulsion system and in its significantly increased operational range when compared to Marte MK2. Other differences can be seen in the increased diameter of the missile to accommodate the turbo engine, the fuel tanks and the air intake. However, Marte ER is shorter and lighter and also incorporates insensitive pyrotechnical devices. With Marte ER terminal guidance has been optimised with an advanced I-band active seeker with adaptive search patterns, excellent discrimination and resistance to ECM.

The family of Marte aircraft, helicopter and ship-launched weapons relies on a "fire-and-forget" missile with a very fast reaction time and an excellent capability to penetrate and saturate a target's anti-missile hard and soft defences.

Antonio Perfetti, Sales and Business Development Group Executive Director and Managing Director of MBDA Italia, said: "With these new missiles MBDA will have an even greater access to the maritime market. These four different configurations of the Marte missile offer our customers a high level of operational flexibility in the area of maritime superiority. With a single product family they can now cover several missions while securing their littoral and blue waters".

The high level of commonality within this family of Marte missiles offers further

advantages in terms of life cycle costs, maintenance logistics and operational readiness. New technological concepts add to this high level of operational readiness. For example, the Marte MK2/N naval version uses a new generation canister which allows missile maintenance to be carried out without downloading the canister. This greatly reduces the time required for inspection and maintenance.

Programme status

A contract was signed at the end of 2003 with ARMAERO (Direzione Generale Degli Armamenti Aeronautici) for the development and manufacturing of a first batch of missiles for the Italian Navy AW.101. Production was launched in 2004. The first qualification test firing of MARTE MK2/S took place in March 2005 from an Italian Navy AW.101 helicopter using a missile fitted with a telemetric warhead. On 2nd October 2006, following a successful test firing from an Italian Navy AW.101 helicopter at the Salto di Quirra range, MBDA completed the development programme for the Italian Navy. Delivery of MARTE MK2/S for the Italian Navy took place between 2007 and 2008 for installation onboard its AW.101 and NH-90 helicopters. Integration and qualification has been completed on both the AW.101 and the NH-90.

MARTE MK2/S mission planning system will be fully integrated onto the AW.101 and NH-90 helicopters and will therefore be available to the respective customers of these platforms. Due to its small size, light weight and flexible configuration, the system is adaptable for a wide range of aerial platforms.

MBDA has been carrying out system definition studies on MARTE MK2/N. These have included analysing shore-based firings of the missile, C2 ship installed equipment and design work for the launch canister. Due to MBDA's extensive experience in ship-launched anti-ship missile systems, MARTE MK2/N has moved very quickly from initial concept to final system design. The first export order for this ship-launched variant has recently been placed.

Notes to editors

With industrial facilities in four European countries and within the USA, MBDA has an annual turnover of €2.7 billion and an order book of €11.9 billion. 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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