



MBDA Showcases the SPEAR Precision Strike Missile for the F-35

At the 2016 Farnborough International Air Show, MBDA will showcase its next generation air-launched networked precision strike weapon, SPEAR, for which the company has recently been awarded a £411M weapon development contract by the UK MOD. It is to be operated by the United Kingdom's F-35 Lightning II and will provide the aircraft with a unique strike capability, fully exploiting its advanced sensor and network capabilities. There is also an option to equip the Eurofighter Typhoon for future phase enhancements.

SPEAR is being developed to precisely engage long range, mobile, fleeting and re-locatable targets in all weathers, day or night, in the presence of countermeasures, obscurants and camouflage, whilst ensuring a safe stand-off range between aircrew and threat.

Prior to being contracted for its development phase by the MOD, the SPEAR programme underwent an extensive set of test and trials activities, as part of an Assessment Phase contract. The results demonstrated that the missile's subsystems and functional chains meet the key criteria of the UK's SPEAR Capability 3 requirement. Successive tests focused on the guidance chain, including seeker and data link, lethal package, including warhead and fusing, culminating in the first air launch demonstration of controlled flight involving the missile's airframe, navigation and propulsion systems. This firing test took place during March 2016 when a SPEAR trials missile was launched from a Eurofighter Typhoon trials aircraft operated by BAE Systems at the QinetiQ Aberporth range in Wales. The missile transitioned through separation from the Typhoon aircraft to powered flight before completing a series of manoeuvres, ending in a terminal dive to the desired point of impact. The missile accurately followed the planned trajectory and was well within simulation predictions; all trial objectives were achieved.

Paul Wester, SPEAR Programme Director, explained the significance of the success saying, "This trial systematically demonstrated an advanced degree of maturity and technical progress that is unusual in an Assessment Phase. The trial had to achieve a variety of "firsts" for SPEAR including the safe separation from the jet, commencement of powered flight, the manoeuvre whereby it rolled and opened its wing in free flight, navigation and the final simulated precision attack. All those actions were a challenge with a new airframe that had never flown and we are building on this very successful foundation with the weapon development phase."

Notes to editors:

On 18th May 2016 the UK MOD has signed a £411M contract with MBDA for the Weapon Development Phase of SPEAR. This contract will run through to completion during 2020, and will result in the missile being readied for series production.

Powered by a turbojet engine, SPEAR has the beyond-the-horizon reach to ensure that the launch aircraft remains safely away from hostile air defence units. SPEAR is equipped with the latest generation multi-effects warhead, designed to meet the demands of the future combat mission.

Fitted with the latest generation multi-sensor seeker designed to operate in all combat conditions, SPEAR will be able to engage a wide range of target types both on land and sea. The weapon is being designed for the F-35, with the Eurofighter Typhoon acting as a trials platform for missile development with the potential as a future operational platform. The F-35 with SPEAR will be flown by the UK's Fleet Air Arm and Royal Air Force.

Other MBDA weapons intended for the UK's F-35 include the ASRAAM Within Visual Range Air to Air Missile that is currently undergoing integration trials in the US and the Meteor Beyond Visual Range Air to Air Missile, which is proposed for Block 4 integration.

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 the only European 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 AIRBUS Group (37.5%), BAE SYSTEMS (37.5%), and Leonardo - Finmeccanica (25%).

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