Successful conclusion of TRIFOM/POLYPHEM experimental programme in near future

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The trilateral experimental programme TRIFOM/POLYPHEM, in which France and Italy are participating alongside Germany, is to be brought to a successful conclusion in the summer of 2002.

The aim of this programme has been to provide proof of the full functional operability of a fibre-optic guided missile system and to demonstrate the functionability of all the new technologies used. Among these are: the powerful booster engine, the fibre-optic spool for long ranges, an improved IR camera, the new aerodynamic missile configuration for increased ranges, the innovative wing geometry with a new folding mechanism and a modified launch canister. A concluding test series, which also includes a free flight over approx. 25 kilometres, is planned to take place at the German test site at Meppen in June 2002.

On the industrial side, EADS/LFK and MBDA Missile Systems are the participants in the TRIFOM/POLYPHEM programme, with the responsibility for the current phase lying in Germany. The start of the development phase is planned for 2003. A precondition for this is that the participating countries France, Germany and Italy reach agreement on this in the coming months and sign an appropriate Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). The German Navy has decided to use POLYPHEM-S as a light antiship missile on its new K130 class corvettes. Development funds and resources have been reserved so that the guided missile system can be adapted for use on the ships.

A future fibre-optic guided missile system can be deployed from various platforms, such as trucks, ships or helicopters. After it has been fired the missile is linked to the ground station via an optical fibre, which unreels from the missile tail during flight. This enables a constant bi-directional datalink to be maintained between missile and platform, i.e. the operator. Via the optical fibre, the data provided by the infrared camera installed in the nose of the missile are transmitted to the operator's monitor. This enables the operator to carry out real-time observation on his screen of the territory the missile is passing over. At the same time, he can track the missile on its automated flight path into the target area, checking this against the mission planning carried out before firing. If necessary, the operator can take over mission control himself (man-in-the-loop concept). When targets appear, he can identify and evaluate these. Thanks to the unambiguous identification of targets and the high precision of the missile, collateral damage can be avoided when combating the selected targets.

From the operational point of view, TRIFOM/POLYPHEM therefore excels in the reliable recognition, exact identification and precise combating of military targets over ranges up to 60 kilometres. The man-in-the-loop concept considerably reduces the risk of endangering non-military facilities or the civilian population.

From his well-protected position of cover, the operator can intervene at any time to modify the identified and selected targets or to abort the mission. POLYPHEM is therefore the only guided missile system which allows a switch of targets after target lock-on has already taken place. This feature is of exceptional military-strategic as well as political importance when seen in the context of current crisis scenarios such as those that have recently emerged in the Balkans or Afghanistan.

With TRIFOM/POLYPHEM, it is possible to carry out real-time reconnaissance and also combat targets without time delay. In addition, the success of a mission can be established

immediately. The images recorded during a mission can be used for other purposes, in particular reconnaissance.

Guidance and control of the missile are not susceptible to jamming since they are effected via optical fibre. The TRIFOM/POLYPHEM guided missile system is air-transportable and is equally suited to use by Army and Navy units. The fact that the system can be used across different component forces reduces the logistic effort for the overall system and also troop training costs.

EADS/LFK-Lenkflugkörpersysteme GmbH is a business unit of EADS European Aeronautic Defence and Space Company and is due to be integrated into the European guided missile industry under the leadership of MBDA Missile Systems before the end of this year.

With revenues amounting to EUR 30.8 billion, EADS, which was founded in July 2000, is the world's second largest aerospace company. EADS has a workforce of approximately 102,970. In Germany, EADS employs approximately 38,450 people.

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