

## Successful ASTER B1NT Firing and Qualification of Long-Range Missile and SAMP/T NG Air Defence System

A major milestone in European air defence was achieved with the successful second firing of the ASTER B1 New Technology (B1NT) missile at the DGA Essais de Missiles test range. This test, conducted in the presence of French, Italian, and UK representatives, validated the missile's long-range interception capabilities and marked a key step in qualifying the long-range performance of both the ASTER B1NT and the SAMP/T NG (New Generation) air defence system.

The ASTER B1NT missile, part of the latest generation of the ASTER family developed by *eurosam*—a joint venture between MBDA and Thales—demonstrated its ability to intercept aerial and missile threats at distances of up to 150 km and at higher altitudes. This second successful firing follows the initial test in October 2024 and confirms significant technological advancements in manoeuvrability, speed, stealth detection, and interception performance. This achievement is a critical development for the bilateral ASTER B1NT and SAMP/T NG programmes, managed by OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Co-operation) on behalf of France and Italy. The system will be delivered to the French Air and Space Force, the Italian Army, and the Italian Air Force. Additionally, the ASTER B1NT missile will be integrated into other defence projects, including the Mid-Life Update of the Franco-Italian Horizon frigates.

The SAMP/T NG is the modernized successor to the original SAMP/T system, already operational in France and Italy. It is Europe's only fully sovereign long-range air defence solution, providing protection against a wide spectrum of aerial threats such as cruise missiles, ballistic missiles (including short and medium-range), anti-radar missiles, helicopters, UAVs, and aircraft. It delivers advanced anti-access/area-denial (A2/AD) capabilities, ensuring the security of both military and strategic civil infrastructures.

The system is designed for seamless operation within national and NATO/coalition air defence networks. It supports interoperability with friendly aircraft and offers 360-degree protection with the ability to engage multiple threats simultaneously beyond 150 km. The system includes four key components: up to 48 ready-to-fire ASTER missiles, a radar capable of detecting targets beyond 350 km, one engagement control module, and up to six launcher modules carrying eight missiles each. The entire setup is highly mobile and can be deployed in under 30 minutes.

ASTER B1NT is characterized by its cutting-edge aerodynamic and pyrotechnic design, incorporating a Ka-band seeker, advanced interception algorithms, and the latest generation of electronics. These technologies provide it with unmatched hit-to-kill accuracy and enable it to neutralize even the most advanced threats, including highly manoeuvrable and hypersonic missiles. The successful testing of ASTER B1NT not only confirms its performance enhancements but also reinforces *eurosam*'s position as Europe's leading provider of sovereign medium and long-range air defence systems. As defence threats evolve, this programme stands as a testament to continued European innovation and strategic cooperation in air defence. The firing further validates the readiness of the SAMP/T NG and ASTER B1NT as pillars of European defence against current and emerging aerial and missile threats.

