

Milestone for Aster B1 NT with first successful firing

MBDA achieved a milestone in European air defence capabilities with the first successful firing of Aster B1 NT (New Technology) at Biscarrosse DGA essais de Missiles on 8th October 2024. The firing was carried out by the French General Directorate of Armaments (DGA) in the presence of Sébastien Lecornu, the French Minister of Armed Forces and Veteran Affairs, and representatives of France, Italy and the UK, who are part of the Principal Anti Air Missile Systems (PAAMS) cooperation. It took place as part of a scenario representative of a complex air defence situation involving both enemy and friendly aircraft. Its success demonstrated Aster B1 NT's capability to discriminate and defeat only the enemy threat. The success was aided by the missile's unique aerodynamic and thrust vector control delivering its unmatched manoeuvrability.

A successful spiral development to defeat high-end threats

This new step marks the spiral development of the combat proven Aster family of missiles, which have been used to defeat asymmetric threats such as UAVs and ballistic missiles for the first time in the recent Red Sea operations. The Aster family boasts over 2000 missiles delivered in the last 20 years with over 250 successful firings, including against tactical ballistic missiles. Aster B1 NT is the latest evolution in this French-Italian co-operation programme. Intended to support Armed Forces as a backbone missile for European air defence of the future, and well beyond 2060.

Thanks to its new guidance technology, Aster B1 NT is the only European missile with a Ka seeker. It also integrates new electronics and pyrotechnics. It is designed to defeat high-end threats, from manoeuvrable targets up to the latest hypersonic weapons. Its development will also improve the capabilities of the whole Aster family, providing Europe with a resilient hypersonic defence capability.

Within a recent order book of over 1000 missiles including Aster 15, Aster 30 B1 and Aster B1 NT, this latest version is also due to be integrated in the new SAMP/T NG ground-based air defence system to be used by Italian and French armed forces. Guaranteeing a unique European air defence capability. The soon-to-be operational SAMP/T NG represents the most innovative evolution of the Franco-Italian programme, developed by EUROSAM (the joint venture between MBDA France, MBDA Italy and Thales) and in service with the two countries through OCCAR (Organisation for Joint Armament Cooperation). It will also equip the French, Italian (since the Mid-Life Upgrade of the Horizon-class frigates will include ASTER B1NT) and UK naval platforms using PAAMS – also known as Sea Viper in the UK – providing local area and naval based air defence.

Aster B1 NT: a cornerstone for SAMP/T NG, the only European multi-layered air defence system

SAMP/T NG provides the capability to engage airborne threats at long range while offering an autonomous capability against ballistic missiles. In addition to its use of the Aster family of missiles, SAMP/T NG will implement a multi-range/multi-layered capability to face the whole spectrum of air threats (remote controlled munitions, drones, anti-ballistic missiles and tactical ballistic missiles). In this new configuration, the SAMP/T NG becomes a fully scalable system able to face any saturating and/or combined attack. As such, the system is becoming the unique European system able to integrate various effectors in full NATO operative ABT/TBM chain.

Thanks to its open architecture SAMP/T NG will lead European air defence towards further operational capabilities, with technological developments leading to next generation interception against new advanced threats, such as hypersonic ones. MBDA will be there, continuing to support the defence and security of its countries and their people.

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