

Working today on the missiles of tomorrow

MBDA will play the lead role in an Innovation and Technology Programme (ITP) launched by France and the UK at the end of 2007, with a view to maturing new technologies for future missiles. Vector takes a closer look.

Why not do together what each country used to do on its own? That is the basic thinking behind the Innovation and Technology Programme (ITP), recently launched by France and the UK in the missile domain, for which MBDA is the lead company. The goal is to mature a portfolio of cutting-edge technologies, which hold the promise of major advances but

which today are still at the laboratory stage. The idea is to incorporate these technologies into future missile or guided system programmes. By teaming together, both countries will achieve substantial economies of scale.

With a total budget of €42 million over three years, financed equally by the two governments and by industry, the programme represents real innovation in the defence sector. It is the first time that a programme involving two governments and industry from two different nations has resulted in the signature of such a contract. MBDA will lead the programme both in France and in the UK, working in collaboration with other companies in both countries (Thales Sys-

tèmes Aéroportés, Thales Missile Electronics, Microturbo, Selex, Roxel, QinetiQ and Nexter Munitions) within a specially created consortium.

“This concept of research is unique”

The programme has been broken down into eight areas⁽¹⁾ which will be led either by MBDA or by another specialist company. Another goal of the ITP is to involve other companies from both countries in the research, particularly SMEs, but also universities and research centres. “This partnership will allow MBDA to federate research efforts in these areas for the benefit of future innovative products,” explains Olivier Lucas, Director of Future Capability Solutions.

“This binational programme is part of MBDA’s effort to take a fresh look at the way in which industry and government work on current armaments programmes. This concept of a complex weapon system research programme, jointly financed by government and industry, is unique,” comments Steve Wadey, Executive Group Director Technical, and Managing Director of MBDA UK.

MBDA CEO Antoine Bouvier hopes that the programme “will become a reference in terms of research and/or demonstration programmes for the defence sector”.

The programme will last for three years, with an option covering a possible extension for a further two years. ●

(1) System, RF seekers, electro-optical seekers, air-breathing propulsion, solid propulsion, lethality, fuzes, mechanical and electronic components.

Checking electronic components.

