

Greece announces major arms purchase

As Mr Mitsotakis said at the TIF (Thessaloniki International Fair which is not being held this year due to the pandemic, but the venue as a podium for political declarations was kept): “In recent years, the defense sector has experienced conditions of disinvestment, after a period of high costs and not always targeted armaments procurements. Well, it's time to balance needs and opportunities. It is time to strengthen the Armed Forces as a legacy for the security of the country, but also as the highest obligation to the Greeks who will bear the cost. It is the price of our place on the map. Today, therefore, I am announcing six emblematic decisions that multiply the power, functionality and effectiveness of Greek weapons.”

The six decisions announced by PM Mitsotakis:

1. The Hellenic Air Force will immediately acquire a squadron of 18 Rafale fighter jets that will replace older Mirage 2000 fighters. As the Greek PM said these are fourth generation superior aircraft that “strengthen Greek deterrent power... in combination with the modernized F-16”
2. The Hellenic Navy is launching the process for the procurement of four new multi-role frigates, while at the same time, it will modernize and upgrade four existing MEKO frigates. Mr Mitsotakis left open, what these ships will be, and several countries are looking at the tender for their own shipyards, or design bureaus. The new ships will also be accompanied by four MH-60R (Romeo) naval helicopters.
3. The arsenal of the three branches is being enriched as a whole. New anti-tank weapons are immediately provided for the Army, new heavy-duty torpedoes for the Navy. New guided missiles for the Air Force. The doctrine is every weapon system will be active throughout its lifespan, as it should and where it is needed.
4. Mr. Mitsotakis also announced the recruitment of 15,000 men and women for an initial five-year period. At the same time, the whole framework of military service and training is being re-evaluated, so that recruits can acquire certified skills for free.
5. The re-activation of Greek defense industry was also announced. Already in the Elefsina shipyards American funds are being invested in their modernization. A strategic investor will soon enter the Scaramanga shipyards, maintaining jobs there, according to Mr Mitsotakis. The tender process was completed, the privatization of ELVO was completed in the immediate future and the Hellenic Aerospace Industry was reorganized, in order to be transformed into an aircraft maintenance center for the wider area.
6. The Armed Forces are enhancing their digital operations, as well as their protection against hybrid-type cyber-attacks. At each of their operational levels, modern systems are installed that ensure a secure flow of information and therefore timely mobilization.

According to Mr. Mitsotakis: “These are six bold choices. Six bold answers not only to the needs of the times, but also to the challenges of history. As can be seen, they are moving at many levels, not only the strengthening of weapons systems, but also the increase of human resources, the modernization of the structures of the Armed Forces, but also the legal framework for defense procurement. In other words, these initiatives constitute a robust program that will become a national shield. At the same time, however, they constitute movements with a growth sign, as they mobilize our national industry, but also with a social

flavor, securing thousands of jobs.”

Rafale

Mr Mitsotakis, during Sunday's meeting with journalists, also in Thessaloniki, clarified that acquisition of Rafale fighters has to do with 12 used and 6 new aircraft. The aircraft are expected within 2021 with the last arriving in-country during 2022.

It can carry a wide range of weapons systems, including the Scalp missiles, which are cruise-type air-to-air missiles with a range of more than 500 kilometers and the air-to-air missiles for shooting beyond the METEOR horizon with a range of up to 100 meters.

But what makes it a game changer aircraft is its electronic active scanning radar that can detect multiple targets simultaneously in the air and on the ground at distances of more than 200 kilometers.

Frigates

The field is open for western manufacturers for four new frigates, but given the needs of the Hellenic Navy, these will have to incorporate area air defense capabilities.

Options include the French Belharra, which had been in the press, which is on the high end of the price levels. Other options for the Hellenic Navy could include the Spanish F-110 class frigates, or the smaller Alfa-3000, Alfa-4000. The cost of the F-110, however, is also very steep. The latest version of the German MEKO A200, which was selected by South Africa (four ships), Algeria (two ships), and most recently by Egypt (six ships), offers advantages vis-a-vis the cost and the configuration-quantity of armament that they can integrate.

Other options include Dutch, Belgian, Swedish designs, each with each own merits.

At the same time, Mitsotakis announce the refurbishment of the four MEKO 2000 frigates already in service. The aim of the program is to upgrade the electronic combat systems, sensors, and radar, which are necessary to upgrade the power of these ships.

The program will include 12 basic subsystems of the ship, including a new CMS combat system, a new 3D radar to replace the old DA-08, a new navigation radar, new intercom systems, a new ESM to replace the old AR data network. 700, Link-16, and the installation of a laser warning system.

The new Miltech TDR-10 electro-optical system is also planned for installation.

The new CMS system has the following candidate systems: Thales TACTICOS, Lockheed Martin CMS330, Saab 9LV Mk4, and Naval Group SETIS.

Candidates for the new 3D radar are Saab Sea Giraffe AMB or 4A, Thales NS100 or SMART-S Mk2, and Hensoldt TRS-4D.

The new navigation radars have the following candidates: SharpEye, Pathfinder, SCOUT Mk3, VisionMaster FT, SCANTER, etc.

The new ESM has the following candidate systems: Saab SME-250, Thales Vigile, Harris ES-3601/3701, Elbit ELISRA, Rafael C-PEARL.

The laser system will most likely be from either Saab or Elbit companies.

A new COMINT system (possibly Thales Altesse) will be installed to replace the old Telegon 10, while APECS II (ECM) systems will remain intact or systems similar to those of modern frigates will be installed.

There is also a possibility of upgrading the Phalanx CIWS to the latest configuration 1B 2.

Torpedoes

The Greek PM also made reference to new heavy torpedoes for the country's Type-214 and modernized Type-209 submarines. If such are included in a package for French procurements they would be of the F21 class. However, there are also contenders from Italy (Black Shark), Germany (DM2A4), UK (Spearfish), Sweden (Torped 62/Torped 2000 in export).

AT missiles

Mr Mitsotakis also referred to the procurement of new AT missiles. More than likely these will include additional numbers of systems already fielded by the Hellenic Army (i.e. TOW, Milan 2), but may include, as some media report the much enhanced Israeli Spike missile. The Spike, however, is a very heavy weapon (at 71 kg) for use by troops on foot, and would have to be vehicle mounted, which would entail the design and construction of a suitable platform that would be in line with other Hellenic Army vehicle requirements.