



The delivery of Taurus missiles is a political decision

Interview with Thomas Gottschild, Managing Director, MBDA Deutschland GmbH

In the Ukraine, Russia has been waging a bloody war against Ukraine for more than two years. Western states are supplying weapons, but they are far from being enough. The Israeli army is operating in the Gaza Strip in response to Hamas atrocities. A peace solution is not in sight. Meanwhile, NATO is celebrating the 75th anniversary of its foundation and quite a few politicians fear significant negative effects on transatlantic relations if Donald Trump wins the US Presidential election in November. These are just a few global political issues that are overshadowing this year's ILA in Berlin. At the same time, international competition for guided missiles on the global market has become increasingly fierce.

Mr. Gottschild, what do you expect from ILA 2024 given these difficult political and industrial conditions? What topics are particularly important to you as head of the German partner in the European MBDA consortium during the Berlin Air Show?

Thomas Gottschild: Given the diversity of threats, MBDA will present around 50 exhibits on five exhibition stands at ILA. The focus is on ground-based air defence, especially drone defence, stand-off precision weapon systems, and real-time simulation of remote carriers in the FCAS network. We exhibit the weapon systems together with national and international partners. For the close range, we are showing a new cost-effective missile for drone defence, the Small Anti-Drone Missile. On the other side of the range spectrum, with HYDIS² we present concepts for defending against hypersonic missiles in the outer atmosphere and go beyond the boundaries of the atmosphere with the ARROW-3 system. MBDA is Israel Aerospace Industries' main contract partner for the ARROW-3 system in Germany. We will be showing the TAURUS standoff weapon both on the MBDA stand and in the Bundeswehr's Military Support Center.

MBDA has developed into the European market leader for guided missile systems due to its know-how, competences and many years of experience. Will you be showing news about your impressive product range during the Berlin Air Show?

Thomas Gottschild: We will present both established systems and innovations. The innovations include a simulation environment for collaborative systems that we developed together with our partner CAE. The goal is to create a virtual environment that supports the development, training and use of network-enabled, collaborative effectors. In the future, armed

forces will be able to use the system for mission planning and to investigate operational concepts.

We will also present our concept for the Remote Carrier Modular Multirole Effector for the first time. The requirements of different projects in the air, sea and EW/cyber domains show a high degree of overlap, on which the basic concept for a versatile, smart missile is based. The Modular Remote Carrier is based on the operational requirements for collaborative, long-range missiles. Depending on the mission, the payloads can be chosen and they can be added to the mission from different domains. In this context, we show the simulation environment for collaborative systems mentioned at the beginning.

Drone defence is becoming increasingly important within the ground-based air defence and so we can present another innovation at the trade fair: At our stand we will be showing our Small Anti-Drone Missile on the Skyraanger 30 tower for the first time.

The controversial delivery of the TAURUS stand-off weapon system to Ukraine is at the centre of the defence policy debate in Germany for months and is dividing minds in the Government, Parliament and in the interested public. What is MBDA Germany's basic position on this very controversial topic?

Thomas Gottschild: This is primarily a political decision, a decision by the Federal Government. In this context, it is important for me to show the industrial perspective to be able to conduct the discussion in a fact-based manner. The fact is, for example, that the TAURUS is currently not in production. If TAURUS deliveries were to occur, they would come from the Bundeswehr's existing stocks. It is also a fact that we have a production line for TAURUS so that we can start production at short notice. What we need is an order to activate our supply chain, a good dozen suppliers contribute to a complex missile like TAURUS. These suppliers only start working for us with an order.

The PATRIOT air defence system has proven itself worldwide as a transatlantic collaboration. This transatlantic cooperation is complemented by European cooperation in order not to become unilaterally dependent on the USA and at the same time to strengthen the defence industry in Europe. Do you think that industrial cooperation with partners in the US will be at risk under a potential President Donald Trump?

Thomas Gottschild: We have been working with Raytheon in a trusted and successful manner at COMLOG since 1987.

◁ **Thomas Gottschild, Managing Director of MBDA Deutschland GmbH, presented his views about global security challenges at the Handelsblatt conference in Berlin. (Photo: Handelsblatt)**

The contract we received from the NATO Support and Procurement Agency earlier this year strengthens industrial and military capabilities in Europe. The volume enables MBDA to set up a production line for PATRIOT missiles and to manufacture important subcomponents in Germany. The COMLOG cooperation for PATRIOT missiles is currently the only one of its kind outside the USA. Overall, the order supports the European PATRIOT user states, creates jobs in Germany and strengthens the supply chain for ammunition. Ultimately, the customer nations benefit from economies of scale and at the same time reduce their logistical effort.

Regardless of this, it is important to further develop and expand skills in Europe – the HYDIS2 programme works in this direction. As part of the MBDA-led project, we are developing critical technologies for an endo-atmospheric missile to maturity. The missile is aimed at new, sophisticated hypersonic threats. Partners and subcontractors from 14 European countries belong to the HYDIS2 consortium.

The NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) has awarded COMLOG, a joint venture between Raytheon and MBDA, its first contract under the European Sky Shield Initiative (ESSI). The NSPA contract provides for deliveries to Germany, the Netherlands, Romania and Spain. What does the order to produce up to 1,000 PATRIOT™ GEM-T missiles mean for MBDA Germany?

Thomas Gottschild: Final assembly of the PATRIOT missiles takes place in Schrobenhausen. We use existing facilities for PATRIOT logistics and at the same time expand our production facilities for the large order. At the same time, our subsidiary Bayern-Chemie is planning to set up the production facility for the PATRIOT engine. We will deliver the first PATRIOT missiles within three years.

Your company announced in March that the European Commission proposed to finance the increase in production of the ENFORCER guided missile under the ASAP programme. We suspect that there was great joy in Schrobenhausen. How do you rate this proposal? What are the next steps until the funds flow from Brussels?

Thomas Gottschild: The sharp increase in demand for defence equipment is a considerable challenge for companies. It's about expanding production capacities, recruiting employees, diversifying supply chains and expanding partnerships. ASAP E.P.I.C. is a helpful approach to support companies in this situation. MBDA Germany has been selected for funding by the European Commission.

The Small Anti-Drone Missile (SADM) is a modern guided missile that can be used against moving aerial targets and especially against small and medium-sized drones. With SADM, MBDA is responding to the increasing importance of counter UAS operations. When will the first SADM be delivered and how do you assess the market potential for counter UAS systems in the future?



The Small Anti-Drone Missile (SADM) of MBDA is used for the defence against small and medium-sized drones. (Photo: MBDA Germany)

Thomas Gottschild: In recent years, armed and unarmed drones in the price range of a few hundred dollars have changed the battlefield. The number of drones and their possible uses on the battlefield will continue to increase significantly.

To defend against small and medium-sized drones, we offer the Bundeswehr a guided missile: The Small Anti-Drone Missile is specially designed for drone defence. It can be carried in large numbers and can be fired at multiple targets at the same time. The technology of the Small Anti-Drone Missile is based on the market-available Enforcer small missile.

Finally, a quick look at the economic situation of your company. We suspect that sales and profits will increase sharply in the next few years. Will you be hiring new employees this year? Are you planning to invest in the locations? What is your forecast for the next few years?

Thomas Gottschild: MBDA Germany is on a growth path and we expect further ammunition orders this year. We are investing around EUR 200 million in our locations in Germany, for example in production buildings and in improving the infrastructure. We intend to create 300 additional jobs by 2025. The security situation has changed significantly in recent years. We are preparing for the challenges of the future to equip the Bundeswehr and allied armed forces in the best possible way. (tb)



△ **MBDA's presence at ILA 2024.**

◁ **German PATRIOT systems are tested at the MBDA test range in Freinhausen. (Photos: MBDA Germany)**