DEFENCE

BGT may propose
new Sidewinder

for ASRAAM

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erman missile specialist Bo-
denseewerk Geratetechnik
(BGT) has confirmed that it is
considering re-entering the ad-
vanced short-range air-to-air
missile (ASRAAM) fray with an
upgraded Sidewinder variant.
The company is almost certain
to respond to the UK Ministry of
Defence's (MoD's)invitation to
tender for Staff Requirement
(Air) 1234, for ASRAAM. BGT
says that "...a Sidewinder up-
grade would be an option" to
meet the requirement.
A BGT bid would propose
upgrading the current guidance
and control unit to provide an
ASRAAM-like performance.
According to BGT, the current
seeker restricts the firing enve-
lope of the missile. Giving it an
improved seeker would extend
its firing boundaries.
The company says that the UK
MoD "seems interested" in the
possible Sidewinder develop-
ment, particularly if, as BGT
claims, it is substantially cheaper
than the British Aerospace/
Hughes ASRAAM development.
Ironically, BGT was originally
prime contractor on this pro-
gramme until a series of setbacks
caused it to be replaced by
British Aerospace Dynamics.
BGT is already upgrading the
AIM-9L Sidewinder now in serv-
ice with a number of European
air forces.
It also envisages the emer-
gence of a Luftwaffe requirement
for a missile with considerably
improved performance over that
of the Sidewinder within the
next two years.
Any bid for the UK require-
ment would be made by BGT
alone, although it says it would
look at subcontracting work on
a competitive basis in the UK.
A number of other companies
besides the British Aerospace/
Hughes consortium and BGT are
looking to bid for the RAF
ASRAAM programme, including
the team of GEC and Matra,
offering a development of
Matra's Mica. Raytheon and
Loral are also considering offer-
ing Sidewinder updates. •

US Navy plans to upgrade VQ-2

squadron with Aries II by 1995

BY MARTIN STREETLY

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he US Navy Spanish-based
VQ-2 electronic-reconnais-
sance squadron is to retire its
five remaining operational
Douglas EA-3B Skywarrior air-
craft by the end of 1991. It will
also replace its six Lockheed
EP-3E Aries Is with the EP-3E
Aries lis.
Conversion to the Aries II is
scheduled for completion dur-
ing 1995.?

To date, VQ-2 has
received one aircraft.
Aries II production is a con-
version in lieu of procurement
programme, which aims to stan-
dardise the three existing EP-3
configurations (thought to com-
prise the EP-3B Batrack and two
electronics standards in the
EP-3E Aries I) and introduce
"modest" levels of equipment
update into 12 low-time P-3C
airframes.

Primary mission equipment
— the ALR-52 multi-band in-
stantaneous frequency-measur-
ing electronic-reconnaissance
receiver suite and/or the ALR-60
Deepwell communications inter-
cept/analysis system — is being
transferred from the Aries I to
the Aries II aircraft. Enhance-
ment of the Aries II mission
capability is envisaged in the
form of a "major" sensor system
upgrade programme. Despite the
fact that the conversion pro-
gramme is not providing a com-
pletely new system, VQ-2
commanding officer, Cdr Dave
Durfee, notes his satisfaction
with the Aries II platform.
Major external differences be-
tween the Aries I and II aircraft
are an extensive antenna "farm"
beneath the wings and rear fuse-
lage, and the introduction of the
IBM ALR-76 combined elec-
tronic support measures radar-
warning equipment.
Seven examples of ALR-76 are
believed to have been procured
for the Aries II programme. The
wing and fuselage antenna farm
is likely to be associated with an
improved communications intel-
ligence capability.

EP-3E Aries uses low-time airframe and existing and new mission equipme

The Aries II rear fuselage carries extensive blade antennae and new radom

Fore and aft antennae for the ALR-76 ESM mark out the Aries II

With VQ-2's land-based;capa-
bility, the USN is establishing a
new carrier-capable electronic
reconnaissance unit (VQ^6) to
support its operations in the
Atlantic/Mediterranean region.
Based in Florida, VQ-6 will op-
erate the specialised ES-3A vari-

ant of the S-3 Viking ASW
aircraft. The envisaged comple-
mentary capabilities of VQ-2
and VQ-6 are to be matched in
the Pacific by the Guam-based
Aries lis of VQ-1 and the car-
rier-capable ES-3As of a second
new squadron, VQ-5. •

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