

IAI unveils tank firing laser homing missile

ISRAELI AIRCRAFT Industries (IAI) has developed and tested a barrel-launched laser homing anti-tank weapon (LAHAT) which is being offered to the US military and Israeli Army to allow tanks to engage helicopters and armoured vehicles. The Israeli company has teamed with General Dynamics Ordnance Systems division in marketing the advanced anti-armour weapon worldwide.

The laser-designated LAHAT missile, which incorporates a tandem warhead, was designed by IAI's MBT division to be fired from 105mm and 120mm tank guns. IAI says the missile would be effective against armoured vehicles and slow-moving helicopters.

A tank crew would use standard rounds for line-of-sight targets and the LAHAT for top-attack of more distant targets in day/night engagements. The tank's laser rangefinder would be replaced with a laser designator. No modification to the tank's main gun would be required for missile firings.

IAI says it has successfully completed a flight test of the LAHAT against a stationary tank.

Production can begin once final engineering and manufacturing development work is completed, programme officials say. The US Army briefly deployed the Shillelagh tank-gun-fired missile on the Sheridan light tank with mixed results, and the Russian Army uses a radio-command anti-tank missile in its T-64 and T-80 tanks, known as the Kobra and which has an anti-helicopter variant. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ KUWAITI MIRAGE SALE

Kuwait is planning to sell 15 Dassault Mirage F-1 fighter planes, say army sources quoted in the local media. France, Belgium and Brazil are mentioned as possible buyers. Kuwait has already sold its fleet of McDonnell Douglas A-4 Skyhawks as part of a modernisation programme based around a purchase of Boeing F/As.

Sukhoi develops new multirole naval two-seat Flanker variant

ALEXANDER VELOVICH/MOSCOW

THE SUKHOI design bureau is developing a new two-seat side-by-side multirole naval fighter based on the Su-27IB prototype, claims the bureau's general director, Mikhail Simonov. The new model will have a conical, rather than a flattened "platypus" nose, housing a multimode radar. The Su-27IB (also designated Su-32FN, or Su-34) has an elliptical antenna optimised for ground mapping.

The prototype Su-27IB (T-10V), which was built using an Su-27 rear fuselage and wing, was previously referred to by Sukhoi as the Su-27KU (*korabl' uchebnie: ship-based trainer*) and was seen on television in the early 1990s making an approach to the carrier *Tbilisi* (later renamed *Admiral Kuznetsov*). Subsequent references to side-by-side Su-27 strike variants have all described the land-based aircraft, even though the Su-32FN was designed for the roles of naval strike and even anti-submarine warfare.

The existence of the project was disclosed by Simonov at the Zhukovski flight test centre on 21



Sukhoi introduced the operational Su-33 and talked about another variant

October, during a presentation to mark the official operational status of the Sukhoi Su-33 single-seat naval fighter. One squadron of Su-33s is based on the *Admiral Kuznetsov*, and home based at Severomorsk in northern Russia.

The announcement may have been timed to coincide with the visit of an Indian delegation to Moscow in November. Russia is believed to be negotiating with India over the possible sale of the Kiev-class carrier *Admiral Gorbokov*.

Rusvooruzhenie, the state arms export agency, has proposed equipping the vessel with a modernised flightdeck and a navalised MAPO

MiG-29K fighter variant. Press reports have accused Rusvooruzhenie of favouring MAPO against Sukhoi recently. The journal *Kommersant Daily* says that Rusvooruzhenie failed to supply documentation and security money in sufficient time to allow Sukhoi to offer the Su-27 for the Greek fighter contest.

Greece officially invited Sukhoi to tender and even extended the deadline for the firm to bid. *Kommersant* quotes an anonymous Rusvooruzhenie official as saying that Russia will offer MiG-29s to Greece regardless of Sukhoi's participation or absence. □

Singapore aims to pull US strings for Longbow

THE US CONGRESS is being asked to approve the release of the Northrop Grumman/Lockheed Martin Longbow millimetre wave radar to Singapore in support of the Boeing AH-64D Apache bid for the Singapore air force's new attack helicopter, to be decided soon.

Singapore is pressing the USA to release the fire control radar as part of any deal to purchase the AH-64D. The system has not yet been cleared for sale to any South-East Asian country, and it is understood the request to release the Longbow to Singapore is meeting some resistance in Washington.

Sources in the USA describe the delay as more "bureaucratic" than

political, and that, given Singapore's strategic importance, it is likely to be approved. There is, however, insufficient time for the statutory notification period before Congress recesses this year and clearance of a second letter of offer will slip until early 1999. Singapore has indicated that it wants to make a final selection by March 1999.

Congress has already approved an initial letter of offer in response to Singapore's request for pricing on eight AH-64Ds and 12 options. The USA had originally proposed a "roadmap", leading to an eventual release of the Longbow and, in the meantime, providing Singapore with system training and early supply of the radar in the event of

conflict (*Flight International*, 13-19 May, P24). The Singapore air force already maintains a detachment of Boeing CH-47D Chinook helicopters at Grand Prairie, Texas, and the USA is proposing extending this arrangement to encompass training on the AH-64D.

The Apache has emerged as the leading candidate after a logistics planning conference in August.

Also competing is the multirole HCP version of the Eurocopter Tiger. Eurocopter is at a possible disadvantage in that the French army is not due to take its first Tiger HAP machine until early 2003, six months behind the first proposed delivery date to the Singapore air force. □