

## A129 gets Stinger as helicopter anti-air missile moves on

RAYTHEON HAS been awarded a contract by Italy to integrate the Stinger Block I air-to-air missile (AAM) with the Agusta A129 Mangusta attack helicopter, as the US company prepares to meet the Shorts Missile Systems (SMS) Starstreak in a competitive shoot-out on the Boeing AH-64D Apache Longbow.

Italy has signed a foreign military sales contract for Raytheon to integrate the Stinger twin missile launcher with the A129's weapon pylon by early 2002. A separate \$10 million contract covers delivery of 30 launchers, with an option for 90.

"Integration of the digital launcher and test firings will take place over 18 months and we don't anticipate any problems. The first phase will involve integrating the system with the navigation control and air safety testing," says Mike Crisp, Raytheon director, Stinger programme. An AAM capability will give the A129 a boost on the international sales market.

Meanwhile, Raytheon is awaiting a US Army contract for limited operational testing of the Stinger on the Apache. Work on fitting the missile to the AH-64D is reported to have begun, while SMS and partner Lockheed Martin are finalising a \$24 million integration contract for Starstreak that is expected to take 18 months to complete.

"We're in the process of preparing to participate in the side-by-side firing. The degree of difficulty in fitting the Starstreak is more extensive, so it's not necessary for us to have the same length of contract," claims Crisp. The army is budgeting \$39 million for the shoot-out, \$15 million of which is from the 1999 budget and must be spent by September.

SMS claims to have overcome problems discovered during Starstreak firings from an AH-64A. The missile's discardable sabot and the launcher's clamshell opening are now hinged to reduce debris, while blast overpressure has been lessened. Work is now focused on software integration with the AH-64D and roll compensation for the helicopter-mounted laser sight. □

# Italy orders more C-130Js as A400M requirement falls

PAUL LEWIS/WASHINGTON DC

THE ITALIAN air force plans to exercise additional options for the stretched Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 Hercules, further reducing its requirement for the Airbus Military Company A400M.

Italy plans to deploy two Hercules squadrons equipped with 12

C-130Js and 12 C130J-30s. "We have 20 aircraft on contract and, using options, will reach 24," says Col Stefano Fort, chief of the air staff logistics department.

The air force is to convert two stretched C-130J-30 options imminently and intends to exercise a second pair of options later. This is on top of the order for two

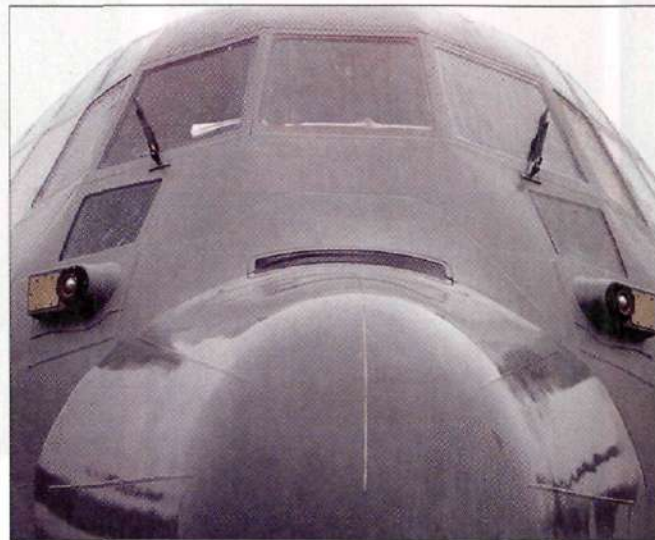
C-130J-30s placed in December. Six of the 18 C-130Js on firm order will be converted to the stretched versions.

The C-130Js and an order for 12 Lockheed Martin Alenia Tactical Transport Systems C-27Js to equip a third transport squadron have eroded the air force's requirement for 44 A400Ms.

"There will be a place for the A400M. There is a lot of army equipment that can't be lifted by the C-130 or commercial jets, but there is no longer space for 44 A400Ms. The number will be dramatically reduced, to no more than a squadron," says Fort.

The first six C-130Js are due for delivery from July, coinciding with the initial retirement of 12 C-130Hs. Fort says the air force hopes to be on contract for the C-27Js by the end of this year and to take delivery of the first aircraft in November next year.

In return, Alenia will take back the air force's 34 surviving G222s (from which the C-27J is developed), of which 22-24 could be remarketed. The G222 is on offer to Australia and Malaysia. □



The distinctive missile/radar warning receivers mark out Italy's C-130J

## SLAM-ER poised for production

THE BOEING Standoff Land Attack Missile-Expanded Response (SLAM-ER) has completed operational test and evaluation (OPEVAL), paving the way for full rate production in May.

A US Navy test team conducted the critical evaluation at Naval Air Weapons Station China Lake, California, between last November and January this year. During the trials, the SLAM-ER scored direct hits in four out of five flight tests, says the USN. The OPEVAL grades the SLAM-ER as operationally effective and suitable, says Boeing.

Last August, the USN elected to keep the weapon in low-rate initial production because of less than

satisfactory performance in flight testing. It had to repeat a portion of OPEVAL to test product enhancements, which included data-link hardware modification and software improvements, to make it easier for pilots to find the target.

Several items, including the missile test-set battery and navigation computer components, were found to be unreliable and replaced.

Boeing is to upgrade the USN's inventory of 700 SLAMs, modifying 56 examples a year. SLAM-ER improvements over the baseline SLAM, include planar wings for improved range, an upgraded warhead, to increase penetration, and software improvements. □

## First Arrow arrives for Israeli air force

THE ISRAELI air force took delivery of its first Arrow anti-ballistic missile on 14 March.

Prime contractor Israel Aircraft Industries (IAI) will continue Arrow development work, says programme manager Dr Dani Peretz, with a further test planned for the middle of this year. The test will "enable IAI to continue development of the system and allow the operating crews to train".

Peretz says the first system to be delivered has an initial operational capability to intercept ballistic missiles and "the full capability will be achieved in the coming years". IAI plans to develop Arrows to handle threats such as Iran's Shihab 3. □