

CRUISE MISSILES PAUL LEWIS / WASHINGTON DC

Lockheed Martin airs JASSM fear

Company warns AGM-158 programme could run into "catastrophe" unless US government funding cuts are reversed

Lockheed Martin is warning of a possible "catastrophe" for the AGM-158 JASSM cruise missile programme unless funding cut by the US House of Representatives is restored. Meanwhile, senior US defence officials are quietly considering the MBDA Storm Shadow missile after its recent success in Iraq.

The House Appropriations Committee (HAC) has voted to reduce JASSM funding from the requested \$102.5 million to \$56 million and to slash the first year's full-rate production by more than half, from 250 to 100 missiles.

"That level of cut would be a catastrophe to this programme... This will not just slow down the programme, it will have unintended

consequences," says Randy Bigum, Lockheed Martin strike weapons vice-president.

The HAC's action follows a number of development and operational test failures since last year, leading to the committee reducing the initial planned purchase to minimise post-production modifications.

In response, Lockheed Martin says that of 33 JASSM launches to date, "only five missile issues" have been identified and fixes have been incorporated into the first low-rate initial production batch now being delivered.

Production cuts threaten to undermine an air force deal to buy 2,400 missiles at a \$400,000 agreed average unit price. In addition, the



LOCKHEED MARTIN

Congress is dropping some funding for JASSM and slashing build numbers

HAC has approved only \$10 million of a requested \$31 million to begin development of an extended-range JASSM, which will have a new powerplant and a threefold increase in the existing

weapon's 370km (200nm) range. "The committee believes it is premature to increase development to such a large degree while there is uncertainty about the baseline weapon," says the HAC report.

Lockheed Martin increased production in the run-up to the Iraq war, but unlike Storm Shadow, JASSM was not deployed.

US officials are understood to have been impressed by Storm Shadow, which offers high attack angles and hardened target penetration. JASSM is limited to a 450kg (1,000lb) blast/fragmentation warhead.

"The US military have seen the missile not only at the China Lake test range, but now in the Gulf," says an industry source. Storm Shadow is not regarded as an alternative to the smaller and stealthier JASSM, but as complementary.

The only weapon that has a similar capability to Storm Shadow is the Boeing Conventional Air Launched Cruise Missile, which is no longer in production.

WEAPONS PROCUREMENT PETER LA FRANCHI / CANBERRA

Australia looks at reopening Project Air 5418

Australia may reopen its Project Air 5418 Follow-On Stand-Off Weapon air-launched cruise missile competition, with the requirement about to be reviewed by Department of Defence committees.

Defence officials in Canberra are preparing revised costing guidance, with Lockheed Martin and Taurus Systems asked to submit new pricing earlier this year.

Lockheed Martin won the original competition in 1999-2000 with the AGM-158 JASSM. Taurus's KEPD-350 was kept in the competition after budget pressures prevented a contract award to Lockheed Martin.

Officials from the companies say a formal request for more information was received earlier this year, with the response date at the end of June. The request follows company-funded integration studies carried out by the contenders in the second half of 2002 and early this year.

The preferred acquisition model will be chosen before September. Recently explored options include proceeding with a JASSM purchase, asking for best and final offers from

both contenders, a partial reopening of the competition to allow other weapons to be considered, or a full tender.

The DoD is hoping for Australian government funding in the May 2004 budget, with the near-simultaneous release of either an open or restricted request for tenders depending on the acquisition process.

The Royal Australian Air Force continues to seek service entry in 2007 for the new weapon, which would be carried by its Boeing F/A-18 Hornets, General Dynamics F-111s and Lockheed Martin AP-3C Orions.

MBDA will contest any revised competition with the Storm Shadow, which made its combat debut in the recent Iraq war.

A key issue in Australian decision-making is whether the missile it selects will be compatible with the Lockheed Martin F-35 Joint Strike Fighter, which is intended to enter RAAF service from 2012. JSF weapons integration plans include JASSM and Storm Shadow, but not the KEPD-350. This means Australia would be required to fund KEPD-350 integration if the 1999-2000 competition result is overturned.

ROTORCRAFT

PZL-Swidnik set to re-engine SW-4 helicopter

PZL-Swidnik is to re-engine the SW-4 light helicopter with Polish-built Pratt & Whitney Canada turboshafts in place of Rolls-Royce 250-C20Rs.

The Polish manufacturer is also set to receive the go-ahead to deliver the first two of 40 SW-4s for the Polish military aviation academy.

Swidnik received certification for the single-engined SW-4 in November last year, but is considering changing the powerplant from the 450shp (335kW) 250-C20R/2 to Polish-assembled PW200s built using parts manufactured under licence by Rzeszów, which was acquired by P&WC in 2001, says Swidnik

president Mieczyslaw Majewski.

Poland's army aviation, border patrol and national police have also expressed interest in the SW-4, which could double the orderbook.

The government is understood to be keen to see locally built engines on the helicopter, which is thought to have a domestic market

of about 200 over the next 15 years.

Swidnik received Polish certification for its upgraded Mi-2 in June. The Mi-2 Plus is powered by two 530shp Rzeszów GTD-350W2 engines, a combined power increase of about 50shp. Swidnik has won certification for its four-axis autopilot for the PZL W-3A2 Sokol.