Japan plans major expansion

JAPAN hopes to buy 70 to 80 additional F-15J Eagles, a further 45 P-3C Orions, and two more E-2C Hawkeyes between 1983 and 1987. Additional purchases would take the number of Mitsubishi-built McDonnell Douglas F-15J air-superiority fighters on order to between 170 and 180, increase to 90 the numbers of Kawasaki-built Lockheed P-3C anti-submarine patrol aircraft, and take the Grumman E-2C airborne early warning fleet to ten.

The five-year build-up, which includes additional C-130H Hercules, tanks, destroyers, and submarines, would cost between $26,000 million and $28,000 million. The plan may meet some resistance, as the expenditure represents some 1-5 per cent of Japan's gross national product (GNP). The controversial 1982 defence budget totals some $1,490 million, or 0.933 per cent of GNP.

The newly approved 1982 defence budget represents a 7.75 per cent increase over 1981. The Air Self-Defence Force receives 31 aircraft, including 25 F-15Js, down from 45 requested. The Maritime SDF receives 26 aircraft, including 7 P-3Cs (down from 17), and the Ground SDF gets 25 aircraft, including 12 Bell AH-1S Cobra/Tow anti-tank helicopters (down from 22).

The first three Lockheed-built Orions are with the 51st Air Unit, Atsugi, for operational test and training. In November the F-3Cs will transfer to the 6th Air Squadron, 4th Air Group. This, the first operational Orion unit, will receive a further three Kawasaki-built aircraft. The first licence-built P-3C rolled out on December 18 and will be delivered by late May.

Mitsubishi is to be the prime contractor for development of XSSM-1 ground-to-ship cruise missile. A prototype will be delivered to the Ground SDF next March. Powered by a small turbojet, the missile will have a range of some 50 n.m. and anti-radar paint treatment. New missile projects include the Chu-MAT medium-range anti-tank weapon to replace the Kawasaki Type 64, a Nike-J high-altitude SAM replacement study, and research into a future man-portable anti-aircraft missile.

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General Dynamics' Electric Boat Division has received a $524 million US Navy contract for the ninth Ohio-class Trident-missile submarine. The contract had been held up by disputes over lagging deliveries and a threat of a law suit by GD over alleged defective workmanship on the first of the class, USS Ohio. The Ohio was launched in November, some two years behind schedule and 50 per cent over budget.

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Syrians fire at Israelis

SYRIAN SA-6 Gainful SAM batteries based in the Bekaa valley fired two missiles at Israeli reconnaissance aircraft on a routine overnight flight over southern Lebanon. Palestinian guerrillas fired three shoulder-launched SA-7s at the aircraft as they flew low over the Sidon area. The missiles missed their targets. Palestinian reports of the January 19 incident refer to five aircraft flying in combat formation.

Confirming the overflights, an Israeli spokesman says that the pilots did not detect any missile launches. The SA-6s were moved into the Bekaa valley, between Beirut and Damascus, on April 29 last year, the day after Israeli fighters shot down two Syrian Mi-8s in the region. There are reported to be five SA-6 batteries in the valley, with eight SA-2, SA-3, and SA-6 batteries deployed along the Syria-Lebanon border.

Syria claims to have shot down eight Israeli reconnaissance drones sent to survey the SA-6 sites. The Israelis admit to losing five. On at least one occasion, a high-flying RF-4 shadowed a propeller-driven drone which was attacked and shot down by SA-6s. The RF-4 is thought to have recorded missile fire-control transmissions to update electronic countermeasures equipment routinely carried by Israeli fighters.

The Soviet-supplied SA-6s are known to be improved upon those encountered by Israelis during the 1973 Yom Kippur War. On that occasion, Israel had to seek US aid to counter the semi-active-homing missile, which had been supplied to the Egyptians only a year earlier. Gainful has a range of between 2 n.m. and 12 n.m. Each battery has three or four tracked launchers and a Straight Flush fire-control vehicle.

AMX costs detailed

DEVELOPMENT of the Aetitalia/Aermacchi/Embraer AMX light-attack fighter will cost L202,189 million (E217 million). Italian Defence Minister Lelio Lagorio reveals. A £151 million draft development contract approved on October 14 last year covers the first four of seven prototypes. Development was estimated at £137 million in January 1981.

Embraer takes a 30 per cent share of development. The Brazilian Air Force plans to buy 79 AMX, against 187 for the Italian Air Force. IAF aircraft will replace G.91s, G.91Ys, and F-104Gs in eight squadrons, halving the total combat strength. AMX was selected over eight foreign tenders, Lagorio says, because the programme means the continuation of design, development, and production capabilities built up for Tornado.

Tracer . . .

US Army Beech RC-12D Improved Guardrail special electronic mission aircraft are to be based in South Korea. Guardrail intercepts and locates enemy ground transmitters. The improved system features a countermeasures-resistant wideband datalink, a lighter and more reliable inertial navigator, and automatic signal acquisition and classification. The first Improved Guardrail will be based in Europe to pave the way for TR-1 deployment. Eight RC-12Ds will be based in South Korea.

New Chief of Air Force Development in the Royal Australian Air Force is Air Vice Marshal James Fleming. He succeeds Air Vice Marshal J. W. Newham, who is to become Head of Australian Defence Staff in Washington.

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