



The Garibaldi will carry Italy's Harrier II Plus aircraft on their first task

Italy deploys Harrier II Plus for first time

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ITALY HAS DEPLOYED its McDonnell Douglas Harrier II Plus operationally for the first time on the aircraft carrier *Garibaldi* as part of a task force covering the withdrawal of United Nations forces from Somalia.

The Harrier II Plus aircraft, assigned to the Gruppo Aeri Imbarcati, were delivered to the

navy in December 1994. The aircrew, however, have been training in the USA and only now are deemed to be combat ready.

Sources say that an Italian navy task group is due to leave from the Brindisi naval base between 20 and 22 January. The contingent will form part of a larger multi-national fleet, including French, UK and US Marine Corps warships.

Along with the three Harriers on the *Garibaldi* will be four army aviation Agusta A.129 Mangusta attack helicopters. Joint training using the Harriers and Mangustas in concert to provide close air-support has been carried out in the past few weeks.

The Italian task force includes some 600 paratroopers and marines. These troops would be deployed by helicopter as part of a cover force, should Somali guerrillas attempt to harass the withdrawing UN forces.

The troops would be air deployed by the recently formed Nucleo Lotta Anfibia. This unit employs Sikorsky SH-3D and Agusta AB-212 helicopters in the amphibious-assault role.

Both types have been modified, with the removal of all anti-submarine-warfare equipment and the fitting of machine guns and rocket pods.

The Italian armed forces are looking to the experience of the Somali operation to feed into the creation of its planned amphibious brigade. The task-force deployment is expected to last at least until the end of March. □

Germany favours France's spy-satellite development

GERMANY WILL JOIN the French Helios 2 intelligence-gathering satellite project, but only on condition that France also commits to developing an active-array radar "spy" satellite as a follow-on programme.

German defence minister Volker Rühle met with his French counterpart François Léotard, along with the Italian and Spanish defence ministers, on 13 January to discuss the project. The two southern European countries appear to be on the brink of rejoining the Helios 2 project.

Rühle says: "Germany is interested in joining the Helios 2 programme, but this must be contingent on a much more ambitious active-array radar satellite."

The Helios 2 will be equipped with infra-red and high-resolution optical sensors. It is intended that it will be deployed in 2001. The active-array satellite is tentatively scheduled for deployment in 2005, and will be all-weather capable, which Helios 2 is not.

The development of an independent "spy" satellite capability

has gained impetus, claim French sources, as concern has grown over the access to US intelligence-satellite data. They claim that the US Department of Defense has held back some satellite-derived intelligence about both Bosnia and Iraq.

Discussing his country's decision to reconsider the Helios 2, Spanish defence minister Julian Garcia Vargas says: "Spain is a partner in Helios 1. The Madrid Government has decided to review our position and come back into the Helios 2 programme, because, with four participating countries, the project is taking on a very strong European character."

Matra Marconi Space has industrial leadership of the Helios II programme. Were Germany to join, then Daimler Benz Aerospace would also become a partner. Daimler Benz and Aerospatiale are discussing the prospect of bringing together their space divisions, with a resolution expected by the middle of this year. □

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ SNECMA-MIKOYAN DEAL

French engine manufacturer Snecma is hoping to conclude a licence-production agreement with Mikoyan in the next few weeks, according to Snecma chairman Bernard Dufour. The two companies have been involved in prolonged negotiations about a licensing agreement covering the Snecma-Turboméca Larzac 04-R20 engine for Mikoyan's MiG-AT jet trainer.

■ PATRIOT ORDER

Tokyo Electron has ordered a new Patriot air-defence missile-operator tactics trainer from Lockheed Sanders for supply to the Japan Air Self-Defence Force. The \$9.9 million contract also includes the upgrade of an existing trainer system.



Raytheon delivers first U-125A

THE FIRST OF UP TO 27 Raytheon Aircraft U-125As earmarked for the search-and-rescue role has been delivered to Japan, where mission-system performance testing is now being carried out by Fuji Heavy Industries. Fuji is Japan's prime-subcontractor on the programme. The formal handover of the first aircraft to the Japan Air Self-Defence Force will take place in the first quarter of this year.