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NATO ALLIES AGREE TO COMMON PROCUREMENT OF ELECTRONIC WARFARE TRAINING AIRCRAFT

NATO's Assistant Secretary General for Defence Support, Robin Beard, said today that there was more "good news" to report on current Alliance efforts to improve arms co-operation.

Referring to the results of the North Atlantic Council meeting of 18th June, Beard said that agreement had been reached to proceed with a project for the acquisition, refurbishment and equipping of three large aircraft to be used for NATO electronic warfare training. This project is commonly referred to as Phase IIA of the NATO Multi-Service Electronic Warfare Support Group (MEWSG).

He indicated that the aircraft and equipment will be used to train air defence, electronic warfare and communications personnel of NATO forces in a realistic Soviet-Warsaw Pact jamming environment, and would provide for a more effective operational use of the Alliance's communications, command and control assets.

Beard went on to describe the Council's agreement as a "classic case of what can be achieved when political authorities get involved in key programmes, and push them forward." He stressed that the aircraft will be purchased and equipped through common infrastructure funding. "Without common funding," he said, "nations would have found it difficult to programme the needed funds, and we would have had costly delays or perhaps no programme at all. This underlines the importance of having common funding arrangements such as are available in the NATO infrastructure and military budget apparatus."

The following additional information regarding MEWSG was provided by a member of Beard's staff:

MEWSG's mission is "to provide a realistic hostile electromagnetic environment in which NATO forces can conduct training and exercise their units in all aspects of warfare."

MEWSG is split into four distinct phases. Phase I, which is now operational, involved the acquisition of Transportable Radar and Communications Simulator Vans (TRACSVANS), and 34 aircraft-mounted pods for radar jamming, radar simulation and chaff dispensing. Phase II (A and B) involves the provision of a realistic jamming environment and the acquisition of a capability to simulate supersonic missile attack. Phase III will add ground-based jamming assets for land and amphibious training. Phase IV will update equipment acquired in earlier phases to keep abreast of changes in the electronic warfare threat.

The United Kingdom is the host nation for Phase I. The United States and Italy have offered to be host nation for Phases IIA and III respectively.

The three refurbished Phase IIA aircraft will be of a type similar to a Boeing 707. The aircraft, which will replicate Soviet long-range stand-off jammers, will be fitted with electronic warfare equipment including radar jammers (A through J frequency bands), communications jammers (HF, VHF, UHF), passive intercept receivers and bulk chaff dispensers. Additional avionics equipment will allow this platform to operate effectively in NATO exercises as an airborne command post.

The funds to acquire the Phase IIA capability (in excess of \$70 million) have been identified in the NATO infrastructure budget by SHAPE and SACLANT. Operations and maintenance costs will be paid from the NATO military budget.

The aircraft will be operational in the early 1990s. The location of their airbase has not yet been decided.

In his concluding remarks Mr. Beard said that "the MEWSG programme is a key conventional defence improvement initiative to which the Secretary General and I attach great importance. I will be following Phase IIA and follow-on phases closely to ensure the timely introduction of these important electronic warfare training assets."