

POLISH NAVY'S MI-14 SAR HELICOPTER LIFETIME EXTENSION. ASW PLATFORMS COME NEXT

According to the information released by the Gdynian Navy Aviation Brigade (GBLMW), its personnel began the commissioning procedure regarding the Mi-14PŁ/R SAR helicopter that underwent an overhaul at the WZL No. 1 facility in Łódź, with a purpose of extending the aircraft's lifetime for another 4 years. The airframe no. 1012 also received a new paint scheme on that occasion. Soon, WZL No. 1 is going to receive the second aircraft of the type. And three Mi-14PŁ platforms are being overhauled at that facility at the moment too.

The GBLMW unit has published photographs of the "1012" Mi-14PŁ/R helicopter via its social media channels. The aircraft is now wearing a new colour scheme. The helicopter was sent to the WZL No. 1 facility a year ago where it underwent the works related to an overhaul which entailed a 4 years lifecycle extension. When the Navy personnel staying in Łódź commissions the work carried out and the aircraft returns to the Darłowo "Aviation Group" of the brigade, the second Mi-14PŁ/R platform would be sent to the WZL No. 1 plant, here we are referring to the "1009" example.

Notably, both helicopters are 3 decades old and back in 2010 they underwent a number of modifications, being transformed from an ASW variant to a SAR variety. The above was required due to the fact that the Mi-14 SAR variants of the "Hazes" owned by the Polish Navy have depleted their lifetime, due to intensiveness of operations. The modifications included dismantling of the equipment that was not needed and widening of the side door and setting up of the rescue equipment.



This is how the Mi-14PL/R looked like during the overhaul. Image Credit: J.Sabak

What is interesting, the Mi-14PL ASW helicopters are also having their lifetimes extended, concomitantly with the SAR platforms. Three helicopters as such were sent to WZL back in May this year. These are the aircraft that had underwent modernization and retrofitting process earlier on, being fitted with new NATO-compliant navigation systems and sonobuoys, and modern MU-90 torpedoes. In total the lifetime extension programme is to include 8 ASW platforms and 2 SAR helicopters.

One of the reasons for the above is the lack of a proper solution when it comes to the new maritime helicopters, even though the procurement has already been announced a few years ago. However, the information released by the Deputy Head of the MoD, Wojciech Skurkiewicz, back in May this year, suggests that the MoD is going to be looking, soon enough, for a replacement of the Kaman SH-2G Super Seasprite shipborne helicopters, the operations and maintenance of which are no longer going to be supported.

The above means that it is the Kamans that are going to be replaced by four helicopters that are to be acquired within the framework of a procurement procedure carried out by the MoD, with regards to helicopters for the Navy. In this situation lifetime extension for the Mi-14 constitutes only an interim solution which can be translated into a short-term gap-filling. 4 years that have been gained by the MoD is the time required to procure and introduce new aircraft into service. Nonetheless, the acquisition has not been planned yet.