

RECORD-BREAKING RADAR PROCUREMENT MADE BY THE POLISH NAVY

The Armament Inspectorate has signed a procurement agreement, concerning the delivery of 27 VisionMaster FT marine navigation radars for the Polish Navy. The order valued at EUR 1.6 million has been awarded to the Gdansk-based Technical and Research Service Co. Ltd. company that acts as the authorized dealer of the Northrop Grumman Sperry Marine navigation systems.

A single contract, concerning delivery of 27 radar packages with a pricetag of EUR 1,642,253.86, is the most significant of the orders as such in history. Earlier on the Polish Navy had been procuring a couple of radars as such per year, when the systems of this kind were getting older and needed to be replaced. According to the norms adopted, the radars have a 15-years long lifecycle, and then they are replaced with new systems.

For instance, it was between 2008 and 2010 when spare parts packages (designated ZCzZ-1 and ZCzZ-3) were acquired for the VisionMaster FT Bridge Master series E systems, with the procurement having a pricetag of PLN 4 million. Then, in 2011, 5 Vision Master FT radars were acquired, with technical documentation. In 2014, 11 VisionMaster FT radars were ordered, in a variety of versions, along with the spares (ZCzZ-1 and ZCzZ-2 kits).

Despite the fact that the procurement concerned maritime navigation radars, the systems are applied beyond the warships domain. They are also used by coastal units, training centres and within the inventory of the coastal comms and surveillance outposts. Since 25 years all of the acquired radars are manufactured by a single supplier (in most cases): Racal Decca, now rebranded, under the name Northrop Grumman Sperry Marine.

At the moment, the Polish Navy operates 110 BridgeMaster navigation radars (series C and E) and 17 new generation VisionMaster FT systems. All of the hardware above went through the procedures defined by the law and became a part of the inventory of the Polish military. Thus, selection of the supplier has not been as surprising as the quantity of radars procured at once.

The contract concluded in December 2018, concerning acquisition of 27 VisionMaster FT radars, will make it possible to acquire equipment that would exhibit identical technical and operational parameters as the systems currently used by the Polish Military. This will, above all, facilitate the execution of training activities. The Navy's training centre utilize a BridgeMaster radar simulator (the UI of which is similar to the VisionMaster FT system), and a radar training system based around the VisionMaster FT and BridgeMaster E solutions.

Approach as such also makes it possible to exchange the personnel between the vessels, and, consequently, enables the Navy to conduct the training onboard the warships, with knowledge of the operators assigned to those vessels, being put into a proper use.

The homogeneity of the equipment also simplifies the logistics, making it possible to use the spare parts packages that had been procured earlier on. Following the selection of radars by other manufacturer, these packages would be useless, thus forcing the user to procure and store more service kits required to operate the vessels used by the Polish Navy. Furthermore, approach as such would require the Navy to carry out a maintenance training cycle for the experts of the Gdynia-based Naval Technology Workshop (Level II maintenance) and for the radar operators (Level I maintenance).