

THE US GIVES GREEN LIGHT TO HOMAR PHASE I. HIMARS SQUADRON WITHOUT AN OFFSET

The State Department agreed to sell 20 HIMARS launchers to Poland, along with the rockets, and the auxiliary equipment package. The maximum transaction value has been defined as USD 655 million (net). No offset has been taken into account here.

According to the release issued by DSCA, Poland received a consent to procure the following:

- 20 HIMARS launchers (probably for a single 18-vehicle squadron plus two training platforms);
- 36 GMLRS Unitary missile packages with explosive/fragmentation warheads, 6 rockets in each, 216 rockets in total;
- 9 GMLRS Alternative Warhead rockets, with warheads designed to act against surface targets, 6 rockets each, 54 rockets in total;
- 30 ATACMS Unitary tactical effectors;
- 33 HMMWV vehicles (probably to be used as the command platforms);
- 24 AFATDS fire control system packages;
- 20 LCRR training rockets, 6 rockets in each package (120 rockets in total);
- Communication systems package, training system package, maintenance support, spares etc.

DSCA Agency stressed that the maximum value of the agreement is USD 655 million. The US Congress has been notified about the transaction and, as in any other case of FMS acquisition (see phase I of the Wisla programme) it has 15 days to withhold the process. In practical terms, however, the above scenario seems unlikely. Following this date Poland is going to receive LOA (Letter of Offer and Acceptance) intergovernmental agreement. Then, line by line review negotiation is going to take place. Next, once the content of the Agreement is set, the Poles will receive a LOA (final offer) signed by the other party. This offer may be then accepted or rejected by the Polish Ministry of Defence.

DSCA notes that potential transaction would support accomplishment of the US policy goals, through reinforcement of the security of the ally, who is a major power supporting stability and economic progress in Europe. No offset has been taken into account here. Lockheed Martin is going to act as the primary contractor.

The notification is a result of the fact that Homar programme procurement process mode has undergone a change. It was in July this year when the Polish Ministry of Defence decided on starting an intergovernmental negotiation with the United States of America within that regard. At the same time the previous procurement procedure has been cancelled, while request concerning the acquisition of the first squadron was received in October.

Earlier on, Homar had been planned to to be manufactured by a consortium consisting of Polish companies, with a foreign partner. Originally the consortium was to be led by HSW, and later on - by PGZ. It had been assumed that Homar would include Polish vehicles and elements of the Topaz fire

control system unified with other fire module elements (Regina, Kryl, Langusta, Krab, and so on). Meanwhile, technology of most of the system's components, including the launchers and the basic missiles, was to be transferred to the Polish companies.

The procurement procedure in question ended up in a failure, even though the US State Department issued an agreement on procurement of Homar elements that were to be acquired via FMS, following a recommendation for HIMARS to pass on, into further phase of the programme. The recommendation in question was issued in July that year. In December, the head of the MoD at the time, Antoni Macierewicz, announced that negotiation with the US were tough. Israeli offer also came back into the equation (IMI Systems Lynx).

Considering the delay in the programme, the MoD made a decision to acquire the first HIMARS squadron "off the shelf". This will make it possible to introduce the equipment into the Missile and Artillery component of the Polish military, but in a standard configuration delivered, in its majority or in complete form, from the US.

GMLRS effector constitutes the primary armament of the HIMARS system. The rocket has a range of 70-80 kilometres and comes in two variants (Unitary and Alternative Warhead). HIMARS may also launch the tactical ATACMS missiles, with a range of 300 kilometers. The weapons use INS/GPS guidance units.

The procurement has an international context as well. HIMARS systems were being periodically deployed to Poland, during the US Army exercises. Report concerning the purposeful character and feasibility of permanent presence of the US forces in Poland is going to cover, among other matters, the assessment of ability to deploy US long range artillery assets to Poland. These units may use the HIMARS system or the older M270 MLRS tracked platform. The MLRS system is already being used by a couple of NATO member states, including Germany. It makes use of the very same armament as the HIMARS platform.

In the future GMLRS is to be upgraded to the GMLRS-ER variant, with a range of 150 kilometers. ATACMS will be complemented and, ultimately, replaced by the newly developed LRPF/PRSM missile, with a range of 499 kilometres. One HIMARS launcher will be able to carry two missiles as such, instead of a single ATACMS effector. At the moment the programme in question is in its infancy.

If Poland completes phase I of the Homar programme it would become the second European user of the system, joining Romania. Romania acquired three HIMARS squadrons with 54 launchers, with a net pricetag of USD 1.25 billion, also making an off-the-shelf purchase without an offset. The price is almost twice as high as the one that is a subject to notification regarding the Polish contract. However, the Bucharest's variant of the HIMARS solution is configured in a manner that is slightly different.

24 AFATDS systems were listed in the notification addressed to Romania, even though the country acquired 3 squadrons, not a single one. Bucharest procured 54 ATACMS missiles (Poland obtained a consent to acquire 30 effectors as such) and 162 GMLRS rocket sets (Poland received a consent to acquire 45 sets as such). The notification for Romania also listed the US-made trucks. DSCA did not mention that element in its release concerning the Polish deal. The above means that Jelcz vehicles may be considered here. However, the drive to make a procurement "off the shelf" and rapidly sign the agreement is somewhat contradictory here.

The notification for the congress is not tantamount to signing of the agreement and it is plausible that the final value would be lower than the announced, maximum value. Lowering the price, when compared to the notified one, has been successfully negotiated in case of phase I of the Wisla programme, procurement of the JASSM missiles and modernization of the F-16 jets back in 2014.

Mariusz Błaszczak, head of the MoD, is satisfied with the fact that consent has been issued with regards to the first HIMARS squadron. Most probably the MoD is going to conclude the contract by the end of this year or in the beginning of the next year.

Further squadrons are to be acquired after adopting a new Technical Modernization Plan which is to happen as of February (introduction of the Homar system is an element of the Armed Forces Development Programme until the year 2026). Polish Ministry of Defence recently informed us: "Acquisition of further squadrons is a subject to analysis pertaining to the option of involving the Polish defense industry to the maximum achievable scope".

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This does not change the fact that the first module, even though it would bring in a major reinforcement concerning the strike capabilities at distances of up to 300 kilometres, is going to be procured "off the shelf", contrary to the initial assumptions. In order to effectively use assets of this class one needs a proper reconnaissance and targeting system, including unmanned assets of proper range and the ability to process and transfer targeting data.

Jakub Palowski