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MILMAG

INTERNATIONAL

POLAND
PRIORITIES ITS MODERNIZATION GOALS

ORP ŚLĄZAK
ENTERS SERVICE

BLACK HAWKS
FOR POLISH SF

Modular Small Arms System GROT

MADE IN POLAND

PGZ

FABRYKA BRONI

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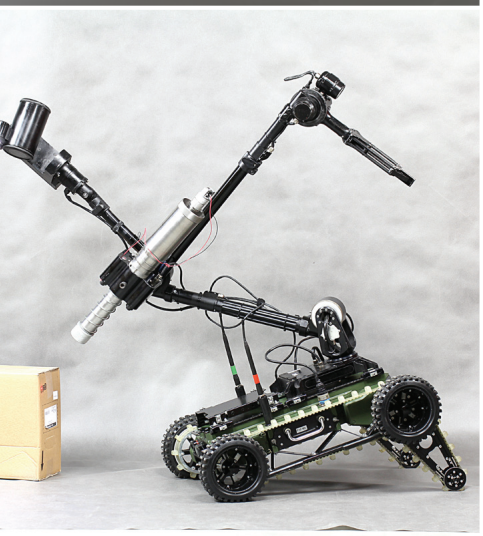

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BALTIC STATES PLAN JOINT PROCUREMENTS

The Estonian Minister of Defence, Jüri Luik, Latvian Minster of Defence, Artis Pabriks, and Permanent Secratary of the Ministry of Defence of Finland, Jukka Juusti, signed a letter of intent for research and technical development in the field of defence. Pursuant to the agreement, consultations will begin for acquiring armoured vehicles for the Defence Forces of Estonia, Latvia and Finland within the framework of tri-lateral defence cooperation.

'The letter of intent that was signed today is a most welcome beginning for the joint undertaking between Estonia, Latvia and Finland in acquiring new armoured vehicles. We agreed to carry out defence--related technical research, and I believe that our cooperation will yield a positive result,' said Minister of Defence, Luik.

The goal is to find an optimal solution for all three countries for increasing infantry mobility, with the initial plan being to reach procurement in 2024. Estonia, Latvia and Finland are initially planning to focus on the cooperation programme, in order to find the common ground required for the future procurement.

'We have a very positive long-term relationship with Finland in terms of procurement policy, we have bought self-propelled artillery and radar systems together. Now, we want to extend this cooperation to Latvia, as all three countries share a common interest in armoured vehicles,' said Luik.

THE MANUFACTURE OF POLISH AW101 KICKS OFF

On December 6th the Leonardo group informed about having manufactured the first batch of structural components of the future AW101 helicopters, which will be operated by the Polish Navy.

The first batch of structural components of the future Polish AW101 helicopters, including the forward lower section of the fuselage and ceiling plate, have been manufactured at the company's subsidiary, PZL Swidnik.

The manufacturer admits that this is the milestone in the process of manufacturing and delivery of four AW101 helicopters to the Polish Navy. The contract, signed in April 2019 and worth approx. 1,65 billion Polish Zloty, includes also an extensive logistical and training package.

Following the delivery to the Polish Navy, which is expected to take place by 2022, the future Polish AW101 helicopters will engage in a wide range of operations, such as ASW warfare and combat search-and-rescue missions.

CZECH REPUBLIC PROCURES HELICOPTERS FROM BELL

On 12th December delegations led by the Czech Minister of Defence, Lubomír Metnar, and U.S. Defence Secretary, Mark Esper, met at Pentagon. Their primary agenda included the procurement of twelve U.S. made H-1 family of helicopters for the Czech Armed Forces, including four AH-1Z Viper attack and eight UH-1Y Venom multirole aircraft. The agreement has a value of 14,6 billion Czech Koruna (574 million Euro, excl. VAT). Deliveries are expected to commence in 2023 and run through to 2024.

'We accepted the U.S. offer of a government-to-government contract for the procurement of eight UH-1Y Venom multirole and four AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters and today we are finally signing the contract. It is an important milestone in the Czech-U.S. relations. We will obtain modern and combat proven machines, increase our capabilities and reduce our dependence on Russian made equipment at the same time', Minister Metnar stated.

'We are pleased that the Czech Republic chose our helicopters. They will increase the Czech Armed Forces' capabilities and interoperability in NATO', Secretary Esper said.

'From the perspective of the Czech Air Force helicopter fleet, this is a decisive step into the 21st century. With the acquisition of the H-1 system, the Czech Armed Forces obtain new capabilities including technology. We have plans envisioning deployment of the new helicopters in the future', said General Aleš Opata, the Chief of General Staff of the Czech Armed Forces.

The H-1 family of helicopters, used by the U.S. Marine Corps, came out best in an open tender competition. According to the Czech MoD, 'the combination of Venom and Viper aircraft best meets the capabilities required for close air support, airlift and medical evacuation. In addition, both designs have 85% commonality', which reduces the logistics, maintenance, and training costs. At the same time both platforms offer a highly efficient and lethal combination of weapon systems to engage enemy's ground, air and maritime targets with maximum effectiveness.

'This mix allows the Czech Republic to accomplish a diverse mission set, from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to close air support and air-to-air warfare', said Joel Best, Director of Military Sales and Strategy, Europe. 'The advanced capabilities of the H-1 program help ensure the safety and security of Czech sons and daughters for years to come', he added.

The signed agreement covers the delivery of attack/multirole helicopters as well as provision of weapon systems, ammunition and spare parts, a training simulator and type training for pilots and ground specialist personnel. 'We have again managed to negotiate a high involvement of the Czech industry. Our demand was for 30% of the contract value and the resulting percentage is even slightly higher', Minister Metnar commented.

The performance of the contract will involve the LOM Praha and VTÚ state enterprises, and Ray Service, Aero Vodochody and VR Group companies. The relevant agreements between those firms and the Bell Corporation were already signed.

CZECH REPUBLIC ACQUIRES ISRAELI RADAR SYSTEMS

On December 5th the International Cooperation Directorate of the Israel Ministry of Defense (SIBAT), signed an agreement with the Czech Ministry of Defense, awarding Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) ELTA, a contract for the acquisition of eight ELM-2084 'Iron Dome' Multi-Mission Radars (MMR). The government-to-government agreement is valued at approximately 125 million USD and was signed by representatives of each party in the city of Prague, for the Czech MADR Mobile Air Defense Radar program.

'I applaud the agreement that was signed [...] with the Czech Ministry of Defense. [...] This agreement will deepen and strengthen the cooperation and relations with our Czech partners. It is an expression of confidence in the capabilities of the Israeli defense establishment and defense industries and highlights the significance of Israeli technology in the face of the threats shared by the international community. We hope to see this agreement opening the door for further cooperation with our Czech partners and with additional NATO states', Director of SIBAT, Brig. Gen. (Ret.), Yair Kulas said.

The radars have air surveillance and air defense capabilities. As detailed in the agreement, these will be delivered to the Czech defense establishment over a period spanning the years 2021-2023 and will be interoperable with Czech and NATO command and control systems.

'The acquisition of eight 'Iron Dome' radars is one of the key modernization projects on behalf of the Czech Armed Forces and specifically the Air Defense branch. I am very happy that by signing the agreement we start the process of ending our dependence on obsolete Russian machinery and at the same time acquire modern and battle--tested systems from a long-term strategic partner, which Israel indeed is. I am also pleased with the possibilities the agreement opens to the Czech defense companies', Minister of Defense of the Czech Republic, Lubomír Metnar, said.

The agreement enables the transfer of cutting-edge technology and know-how from Israel to Czech partners, whose capabilities will be greatly enhanced. Furthermore, the agreement stipulates the involvement of and collaboration with Czech defense industries at 30% of the procurement, indicating that significant parts of the systems will be produced locally.

'The MADR program expands the global use of the ELM- 2084 MMR radar, known as the 'Iron Dome' system radar, which currently includes over 100 systems contracted worldwide (including NATO countries). We are proud and honored to supply the best combat proven multi-mission radar to the Czech armed forces. These radars will propel forward the Czech Air-force capabilities and enable to confront the most advanced aerial threats. We believe that the MADR program will pave the path to additional cooperation between the Israeli and Czech defense industries', said IAI VP and CEO of ELTA, Yoav Tourgeman.

TROOP TRANSPORT EXERCISES IN LITHUANIA

In the beginning of December a train set from Germany loaded with containers of combat stocks and military equipment – infantry fighting vehicles and all-terrain vehicles – arrived at the Kaunas Railway Station. It was a logistical exercise held in relation to the European Union Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) by logisticians of the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group Lithuania and the Lithuanian Armed Forces.

Military equipment and stocks were loaded into railroad cars in Germany and brought to Lithuania. The objective of such exercise was to train and simplify the procedures of military transit of EU and NATO forces in order to make movement of supplies in Europe quicker and freer which would be critical in case the Baltic defence capabilities needed reinforcement.

The cargo was unloaded and transported further, to the logistics centre in Rukla where the Mechanised Infantry Brigade 'Iron Wolf' and the NATO enhanced Forward Presence Battalion Battle Group integrated into it are based.

The Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) is a cooperation platform based on the Treaty of Lisbon with 25 participant EU member states that seek to develop their military capabilities. The concrete deployment of military stocks was carried out in the framework of the German-led PESCO project on a Network of Logistic Hubs in Europe and Support to Operations which is aimed at developing the network of logistic hubs in the territory of the European Union and improving the procedures of military stocks transit, as well as to cut down on the time provision takes.

ROTATIONAL DEPLOYMENT OF US SOLDIERS TO LITHUANIA

According to the manufacturer, ZM Bumar-Labedy, the first batch of modified T-72M1 MBTs, consisting eight vehicles, should be delivered to the Polish Army by the end of December. The scope of upgrade works includes the installation of more efficient observation sets for the commander, driver and gunner, which will enhance situational awareness of the crew, especially in low visibility conditions, as well as new digital internal/external communication systems, such as radios and FONET system from WB Group.

The contract for modification of an unspecified number of T-72M1 MBTs was signed in July between the Polish Ministry of Defence (MoD) and a consortium, composed of the Polish Armaments Group (Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa, PGZ), ZM Bumar-Labedy and Wojskowe Zaklady Motoryzacyjne (WZM). The agreement is worth 1.75 billion Polish Zloty. Deliveries should run through to 2025.

'We are modernizing the equipment, which is in the inventory of the Polish Army. Thanks to this upgrade, main battle tanks will be equipped with modern targeting, navigation and observation systems, as well as new digital comms', said Mariusz Blaszczak, the Minister of Defence, during the signing ceremony.

The modification of T-72 MBTs is considered to be an interim solution before the MoD moves forward with the long awaited procurement of several hundred next generation tanks under the 'Wilk' programme. New MBTs will supplement and eventually replace currently operated T-72s and PT-91s, which no longer meet the requirements of the modern battlefield.

NEW UAVS FOR LATVIAN ARMED FORCES

The Ministry of Defense of Latvia signed an agreement with the local manufacturer, UAV Factory, to continue delivery and maintenance of Penguin B unmanned aerial vehicles in order to strengthen combat capabilities of the National Armed Forces.

'I am pleased with the successful cooperation with the Latvian company UAV Factory, which allows us to continue supplying the armed forces with unmanned aircraft. By purposefully developing cooperation with the Latvian defense industry, we contribute to security of supply and make a significant contribution to the development of the Latvian economy as a whole', said the Minister of Defense, Artis Pabriks.

The new batch of locally designed UAVs will be delivered to the Latvian Armed Forces in the second half of 2020. The agreement is a follow up to the original contract, that called for the delivery of an initial batch of UAV Factory's unmanned systems, which eventually were used in a series of tests, intended to confirm the platform's operational capabilities and develop new tactics of using UAVs on the battlefield by Latvian soldiers.

According to the Latvian MoD, the new batch of UAV Factory's unmanned systems intended for delivery next year will include an improved variant of the platform, with enhancements implemented in result of the test phase. The contract calls also for the upgrade of the initial batch of Penguin B UAVs.

Aside from serving the needs of the Latvian Armed Forces, the new UAVs will also be used to assist the public in rescue, search or similar civilian operations.

POLAND AND BALTIC STATES HOLD DISCUSSIONS

On December 16-17th ministers of defence of Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, Artis Pabriks, Raimundas Karoblis and Jüri Luik, along with the head of the ministry of defence of Poland, Mariusz Blaszczak, met in the capital of Estonia, Tallinn. The ministers discussed the Baltic-Polish cooperation in security and defence areas and exchanged views on the regional security situation. Other topics of the meeting included regional air defence, NATO agenda and U.S. presence in the region.

On December 17th the Baltic defence ministers carried on with the Baltic agenda, discussing trilateral Baltic cooperation projects, such as development of a joint regional maritime awareness capability and special operations forces cooperation. The three Baltic defence ministers signed a Joint Communique at the end of the meeting.

Defence ministers and Chiefs of Defence of the three Baltic States meet biannually. Such meetings are followed by discussions held by Baltic Defence Policy Directors, Commanders of air, land, naval, and special forces and experts of various levels. Baltic Sea partners debate on political aspects of regional security and joint development of practical cooperation projects, such as the Baltic Defence College, assignment of a joint Baltic unit to NATO forces, Baltic Air Surveillance Network and Control System and Baltic Naval Squadron.

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NEW JELCZ UTILITY TRUCKS FOR THE WISLA PROGRAMME

On December 16th the Polish Ministry of Defence and Military Armament Works (Wojskowe Zaklady Uzbrojenia, WZU), a member of the Polish Armaments Group (Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa, PGZ), signed a contract for delivery of 8 transport-loading trucks. The agreement has a value of over 54 million Polish Zloty (12,6 million Euro), and includes also logistic and training packages as well as repair/maintenance service option.

Deliveries of utility trucks, along with trailers and communication systems, should conclude by September 2022. These new vehicles will be used to transport and load on launchers various medium range missile systems operated by the first squadron (consisting of two batteries) of the Polish IBCS-based Patriot air-and-missile defence system, which will be commissioned under the ongoing 'Wisla' programme.

New transport-loading vehicles will be based on the locally designed Jelcz 882 series chassis, featuring an armoured crew cabin, an 8x8 drive system with an MTU engine, as well as a loading crane and a two-axis trailer designed by Autosan. It is expected that each vehicle will be able to transport up to 12 missiles plus an additional dozen loaded on the trailer.

POLISH SF RECEIVE S-70I BLACK HAWK HELICOPTERS

The delivery of four S-70i Black Hawk helicopters took place on 20th December at the 1st Airlift Base (1. Baza Lotnictwa Transportowego) in Warsaw. The ceremony was attended by, among others, the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and the Minister of National Defence, Mariusz Blaszczak.

During his speech, President Duda admitted that the requirement of the Polish Special Forces for new transport/multirole helicopters is much bigger than just the 4 platforms, adding that he hopes that Poland will be able to fill this requirement in the nearest future.

New S-70i helicopters, which were manufactured by PZL Mielec, the local subsidiary of Lockheed Martin, will enhance air mobility of the Polish Special Forces. However, at the moment it's not sure what capacity will the new helicopters be operated in, either providing troop transport capability to all of the Polish SF units or just one of them.

The contract for 4 new S-70i Black Hawk helicopters in the SF configuration was signed on 25th January. It had a value of 683,4 million Polish Zloty (160,3 million EUR) and covered the delivery of helicopters as well as technical and training packages and installation of additional, specifically selected onboard equipment.

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POLAND HOLDS ON TO HONKER

On 17th December the 2nd Regional Logistic Base (2. Regionalna Baza Logistyczna, 2. RBLog.) in Warsaw informed that it cancelled the tender for procurement of a series of a general purpose utility/tactical vehicles, which were to replace legacy Honkers 4x4, that are widely operated in the Polish Armed Forces, but no longer meet the requirements of the modern battlefield.

The open tender procedure was officially launched on 14th October. It called for procurement of 635 general purpose utility/tactical vehicles, with deliveries expected to commence in 2020 and run through to 2022. Among these, 485 vehicles were to be procured under the base contract, plus additional 150 vehicles as an option.

The tender was officially cancelled due to the fact that all of the bids submitted by particular manufactures exceeded programme's budget.

The Polish Army operates approx. 2 500 Honker vehicles in several configurations, including: Tarpan Honker, Honker 2324, Honker 2000 and Honker 2000 2N, as well as special purpose variants, such as Honker Skorpion-3, ZWD-3, WD-2001 or ZWD-99bat. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) has been unsuccessfully trying to select the favourable replacement platform for the past four years.

AFATDS FOR POLAND'S HOMAR

On 9th December the U.S. Department of Defense and Raytheon signed a contract for production and delivery of the Advanced Field Artillery Tactical Data System (AFATDS) for Poland and Romania. AFATDS will be integrated with M142 HIMARS (High Mobility Artillery Rocket System) rocket artillery batteries, which were ordered by the armed forces of both countries.

The contract has a value of over $26 million. According to the DoD, work 'will be performed in Woburn, Massachusetts, with an estimated completion date of Dec. 19, 2021'.

Poland contracted delivery of one squadron of M142 HIMARS system on 13th February 2019. The system will be procured under the 'Homar' modernization programme. The agreement had a value of $414 million.

The contract calls for delivery of M142 HIMARS launchers, Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System (GMLRS) M31 Unitary, GMLRS M30A1 alternative warheads, Army Tactical Missile System M57 Unitary, AFATDS, multiple launcher pod assembly M68A2 trainers and M1151A1 High Mobility Multi-purpose Wheeled Vehicles.

On 26th 2018 Romania signed a contract for delivery of three HIMARS rocket artillery squadrons for $1,5 billion.

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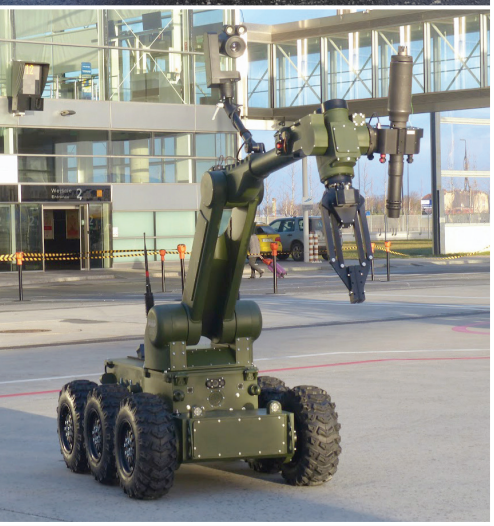

IBIS® is a robot for pyrotechnic operations and reconnaissance. Upon installation of additional devices, it can be used, among others, for disposal of dangerous objects, chemical detection and rescue operations. Six-wheeled chassis with independent drive of each wheel allows to operate in challenging and varied terrain (bedrock, wetlands, muddy terrain and debris).

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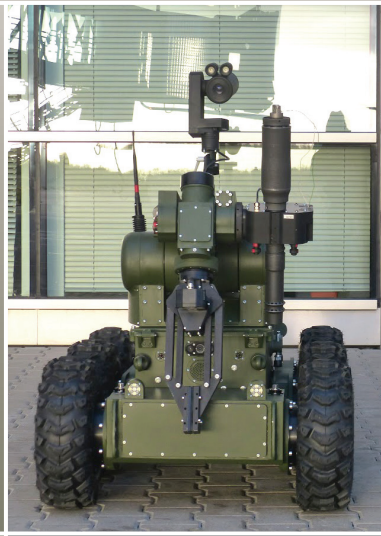

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Poland priorities its modernization goals

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The Polish Ministry of Defense (MoD) outlined a number of priority modernization programmes, which are expected to significantly enhance country's security and defensive capabilities. Planned investments relate to all branches of Polish Armed Forces, with special focus on air and land domains, which might play a decisive role in providing country's prosperity and safety in the future.

The new Technical Modernization Plan (TMP), which was prepared under the supervision of the Minister of Defense, Mariusz Blaszczak and presented by him in October, covers a period of 2021-2035. In the course of the next 15 years Poland will spend 524 billion Polish Zloty (€123 billion) on procurement of new military equipment or upgrade of the currently operated one.

The TMP outlines a series of high priority procurement programmes, which will affect all branches of the country's armed forces and significantly enhance its operational capabilities. Due to its multiannual character, the new TMP will simplify procurement procedures and enhance effectiveness of acquisition efforts.

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AMD ASSETS TOP ON THE PRIORITY LIST

Poland confirmed its will to modernize country's medium and short range air-and-missile defense (AMD) systems under the 'Wisla' and 'Narew' programmes. The former calls for procurement of eight batteries of the Patriot-based AMD system.

Under the 1st phase of the 'Wisla' programme, which was initiated on 28th March 2018 by signing of the first Letter of Acceptance (LoA), Poland will procure two Patriot-based batteries in the initial, 3+

configuration. The contract envisions also the acquisition of the Northrop Grumman-developed IAMD Battle Command System (IBCS) and 208 PAC-3 MSE missiles from Lockheed Martin. The 2nd phase of the programme, which is under negotiations and still awaits finalization, calls for the acquisition of another batch of 6 Patriot batteries.

At the later date the 'Wisla' programme will also see procurement of a new 360° AESA-GaN radar in a similar configuration as the U.S. Army's new radar system, and a low-cost interceptor, to complement the PAC-3 MSE missile

© MBDA

According to the Polish MoD, the second programme, 'Narew', is expected to provide the country with an enhanced short range air defense capability by the procurement of close to 20 batteries of the AMD system. It will eventually complement the 'Wisla' and 'Pilica' (VSHORAD) systems.

It is planned that 'Narew' AMD system will provide protection to various assets, such as troops on the move, command centers or critical infrastructure, utilizing the same IBCS system as the medium range 'Wisla'.

Although a number of manufacturers have initially shown interest in the 'Narew' programme, currently only two companies, Raytheon/Kongsberg and MBDA-UK, are being identified as the most obvious front-runners.

The Raytheon/Kongsberg consortium offers Poland its modernized, tested and combat proven National Advanced Surface-to-Air Missile System (NASAMS), which utilises a number of off--the-shelf and tested technology solutions, such as the AIM-120 AMRAAM missiles.

On the other hand, MBDA-UK promotes its well-known CAMM family of SAMs, which according to the manufacturer could be integrated with the IBCS command systems, as well as a number of locally designed and manufactured observation systems.

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Although due to a number of reasons 'Wisla' won't see much involvement of the local defense industry in the finalization of the whole programme, 'Narew' has a chance to be a totally different case, as the MoD envisions basing the whole SHORAD solution mostly on locally designed – or at least manufactured – components.

Both front-runners seem to be aware of the requirement and declare their will to involve local partners in the whole programme, allowing for many of Polish defense companies to integrate their products with Western-designed technology solutions and opening a change for them to enhance cooperation with foreign partners and

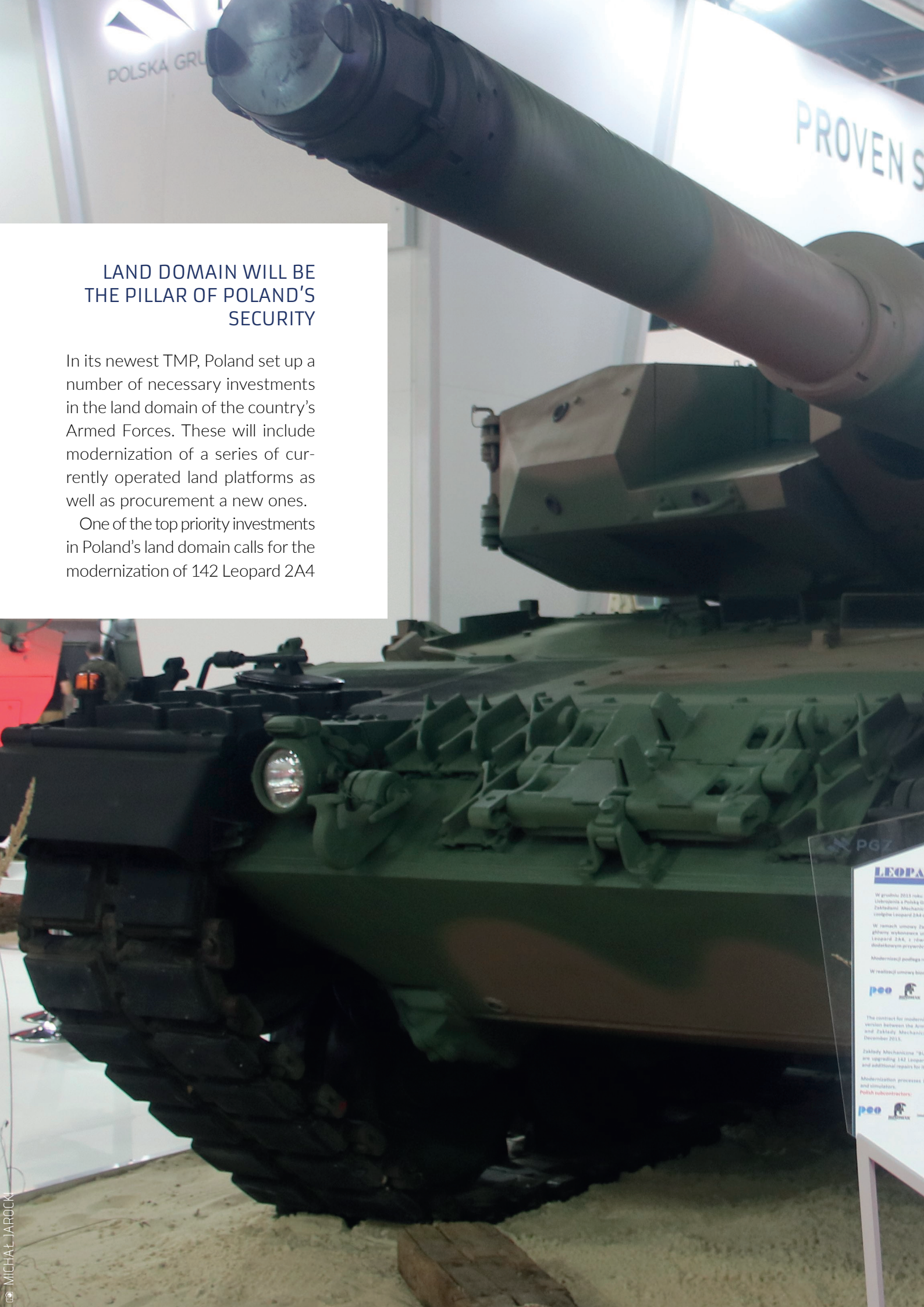
therefore promote their sales offer on the export markets, something which they would not be capable of doing while acting independently.

MBDA-UK's representative in Poland, Jan Grabowski, confirmed in an interview for MILMAG that his company is in discussions with several Polish defense companies, most of them belonging to the Polish Armaments Group (PGZ, Polska Grupa Zbrojeniowa). The manufacturer is willing to set up industrial cooperation, reaching far beyond the 'Narew' programme, with such companies as CTM, HSW, Jelcz, Mesko, Pit-Radwar and WZE in Zielonka.

LAND DOMAIN WILL BE THE PILLAR OF POLAND'S SECURITY

In its newest TMP, Poland set up a number of necessary investments in the land domain of the country's Armed Forces. These will include modernization of a series of currently operated land platforms as well as procurement a new ones.

One of the top priority investments in Poland's land domain calls for the modernization of 142 Leopard 2A4



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main battle tanks (MBT) to the 2PL standard. This task is finalized by a consortium of PGZ and ZM Bumar Labedy, which partnered with the German Rheinmetall. The full fleet of Leopard 2PL MBTs is expected to be delivered to the Polish Army in the beginning of the 2020s.

However, lately the programme has run into a number of difficulties, most of which relate to not satisfying quality of a few prototype Leopard tanks, which were delivered to PGZ/ZM Bumar Labedy by Rheinmetall late last year. During their inspection and initial tests a number of technical issues were discovered, resulting in prolonged repair and modernization works.

Therefore, the whole programme is much delayed and it seems that the manufacturer won't be able to meet the original delivery schedule. What is worse, currently several dozen of the Leopard 2A4 MBTs remains disassembled at the ZM Bumar Ladeby factory, awaiting for modernization, in result of which the number of operational MBTs in Polish Army's frontline units was drastically scaled down.

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Aside from the prolonged modernization of Leopard 2PL MBTs, the Polish MoD also decided to modify the fleet of Soviet-era, obsolete T-72M1 tanks. The contract, which was signed in July 2019 with a consortium composed by the Polish Armaments Group, ZM Bumar-Labedy and Wojskowe Zaklady Motoryzacyjne (WZM), has a value of 1.75 billion Polish Zloty.

The scope of upgrade works includes the installation of more efficient observation sets for the

commander, driver and gunner, which will enhance situational awareness of the crew, especially in low visibility conditions, as well as new digital internal/external communication systems, such as radios and a digital vehicular C2 system (FONET) from WB Group.

According to the manufacturer, ZM Bumar-Labedy, the first batch of modified T-72M1 MBTs, consisting of eight tanks, should be delivered to the Polish Army by the end of December. Further deliveries should run through to 2025.

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Modernization of Leopard 2PL and the upgrade of T-72M1 MBTs is interpreted as an interim solution, before the long-awaited 'Wilk' programme is finally launched. It calls for procurement of several hundred next generation main battle tanks, which could be built either independently by the local defense industry – which is considered as a less likely option – or in cooperation with foreign partners, like France and Germany.

Next generation MBTs are expected to replace obsolete T-72M1 and PT-91 tanks and initially supplement the fleet of several hundred Leopard 2PL and 2A5 MBTs, with the plan to eventually replace them as well.

It is expected that if Poland decides to work on the next generation MTB platform independently, it could follow the example of such countries as Turkey or Republic of Korea, which several decades ago launched their own research-and-development programmes, intending to design and manufacture their own MBT platforms.

However, this solution seems to be much more demanding in terms of money and time needed to be spent on designing a new platform. Therefore, it is more possible that the country will eventually join one of the multinational development programmes, which have been launched lately. The latter option will, nonetheless, mean that Poland and its defense industry could, at most, play the role of subcontractors and suppliers, rather than becoming major industrial partners in such an endeavour.

Under the ‘Borsuk’ programme Poland intends to acquire a number of next generation, swimming, tracked infantry fighting vehicles (IFV). The project is run by the Polish MoD in partnership with Huta Stalowa Wola (HSW), a member of the PGZ consortium. During this year’s International Defence Industry Exhibition (MSPO) in Kielce the manufacturer exhibited, for the first time, a prototype of its Nowy Bojowy Pływający Wóz Piechoty (NBPWP) IFV, which is still under development.

The prototype of the new Polish IFV went through a series of static and dynamic tests over the past several months, which were to confirm platform’s handling and operational capabilities. In result, a number of design modifications were implemented, thanks to which the platform will meet the requirements of the Polish Army.

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The NBPWP will be fitted with a 30mm turreted, remote-controlled weapon system (Zdalnie Sterowany System Wieżowy, ZSSW-30), which is able to engage enemy's light and heavy armoured targets in different climate conditions.

The next generation IFV is expected to have a swimming capability. It will be able to cross wide water obstacles and operate in diversified terrain. The platform should present a high level of manoeuvrability. It will be also adjusted to transport by air or land.

The 'Borsuk' programme calls for the procurement of up to several thousand next generation IFVs. They will replace currently used BWP-1s, which due to their obsolescence no longer meet the requirements of the modern battlefield.

NEW MULTIROLE FIGHTER JETS

One of the major modernization programmes in the new Polish TMP, 'Harpia', calls for procurement of 32 F-35A Lightning II 5th generation multirole fighter aircraft, which will significantly enhance operational capabilities of the country's Air Force to protect Poland's airspace from 3rd party threats.

The 'Harpia' programme, which was launched late 2018, has since then noticeably moved forward, as the Polish MoD already entered negotiations with the U.S. Government over the planned procurement. Discussions started shortly after the U.S. Congress approved the acquisition.

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Acquisition of a fleet of F-35 multirole fighter aircraft will allow Poland to commence the long-awaited phase out of currently operated, Soviet-era Su-22 bombers/fighters and MiG-29 fighters, which no longer meet the requirements of the modern battlefield and do not provide the country with sufficient self-defense capabilities.

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Although some representatives of the Polish MoD, like Wojciech Skurkiewicz, the Secretary of State, suggest, that Poland might decide to procure another batch of 16 F-35s at the later date, it seems more likely, that the country will eventually quit this plan.

Instead, it is expected that Poland will acquire at least one more squadron of F-16 multirole fighter jets in its latest Block 70/72 configuration. They would complement 48 F-16C/D Block 52+ aircraft, that are currently operated by the Polish Air Force. Eventually, the latter might also undergo upgrade to the Block 70/72 variant.

NAVAL DOMAIN REGAINS ITS POSITION

The Polish MoD outlined a number of planned investments in the naval domain, which focus on upholding Polish Navy's capabilities to conduct surface and sub-surface warfare operations. The main modernization programme calls for the procurement of a series of next generation submarines under the 'Orka' project, which will restore the Polish Navy's submarine fleet, running aground in recent years after decommissioning of nearly half of its submarines.

The next generation submarines are expected to have a cruise missile launch capability. They will also be fitted with the AIP system, allowing for them to stay submerged and away from home base for a longer period of time. It seems most likely that the Orka-class vessels will be built locally in partnership with one of European manufacturers, such as the French Naval Group, German tkMS or Swedish Saab.

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Before the Polish Navy commissions its long-awaited next generation conventional submarines, which might take well over a decade, the service plans to introduce an interim solution in form of procuring (or leasing) of a number of 2nd hand submarines from one of the allied countries.

In late November, during a commissioning ceremony of the ORP Slazak offshore patrol vessel, which took place at the Naval Base in Gdynia, the Minister of Defense, Mariusz Blaszczak, announced that Poland will most likely procure or lease two submarines from Sweden, most probably speaking about HSwMS Södermanland and HMwMS Östergötland of the A17/ Södermanland class.

'We have concluded the analysis process, in result of which we came to the conclusion that we need to provide an interim solution in regards to submarines. The analysis showed that cooperation with our Swedish partner is the most favourable solution. We've already started negotiations,' said Mariusz Blaszczak.

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Aside from restoring Polish Navy's submarine fleet, the MoD also intends to procure a series of surface vessels, such as two coastal defense vessels under the 'Miecznik' programme or six locally built light rocket vessels under the 'Murena' project.

The MoD intends to finalize both programmes in as high level of cooperation with the local defense and shipbuilding industry as possible. It is very likely that the department will prefer to contract delivery of both classes of vessels to Polish companies. However, they are expected to partner with a number of foreign manufacturers, which could provide the necessary knowledge, experience and technical solutions to the project.

JAKUB LINK-LENCZOWSKI

ORP ŚLĄZAK enters service

The newest addition to the Polish Navy's combat fleet, the ORP Slazak offshore patrol vessel, was finally commissioned after several years of delay. The troublesome procurement programme, which in its beginning called for procurement of several vessels of the class, came to the end. However, before the vessel starts its first operational deployment, it will have to go through a series of trials and training sessions, allowing the crew to conclude its certification and check platform's operational capabilities.

MICHAŁ JAROCKI
POLISH MoD

Nearly a two-decade long programme to build the Polish sole offshore patrol vessel, ORP Slazak (241), came to a near end in late November, as the OPV was commissioned by the Polish Navy. The ceremony took place during celebrations to mark the service's 101st anniversary.

The commissioning ceremony took place on 28th November at the Naval Base in Gdynia. The event was presided by Poland's Minister of Defence, Mariusz Blaszczak, and representatives of Polish Navy's high command. According to the Polish MoD, ORP Slazak is expected to reach the Final Operational Capability in the coming months


ORP ŚLĄZA

ORP Slazak was originally built as an ORP Gawron corvette, the first in a series of vessels of this class, which eventually never came to life. The vessel is based on the MEKO A-100 design from the German Blohm und Voss shipyard. According to the Polish Navy, during the next couple of months ORP Slazak will go through a series of trials. Their goal will be to confirm the vessel's operational capabilities and conclude crew training

The Polish OPR Slazak is 95.4m long and 13m wide. The vessels has a full displacement of 2200t. It is capable of reaching speeds of up to 30kt. It has a maximum range of 4500nm. ORP Slazak is armed with a 76mm OTO Melara SR naval gun, two 30mm Marlin-WS secondary weapons, four mounts for 12.7mm WKM-Bm machine guns and the same number of launchers for PPZR Grom air defence missile systems

OPR Slazak is designed to support a wide range of operations, such as ASuW, AAW, patrol, anti-piracy or special forces. The vessel is capable of acting on the battlefield either as a sole, independent platform, protecting Poland's shores, or as part of a multinational task force working on the open seas


AZAK

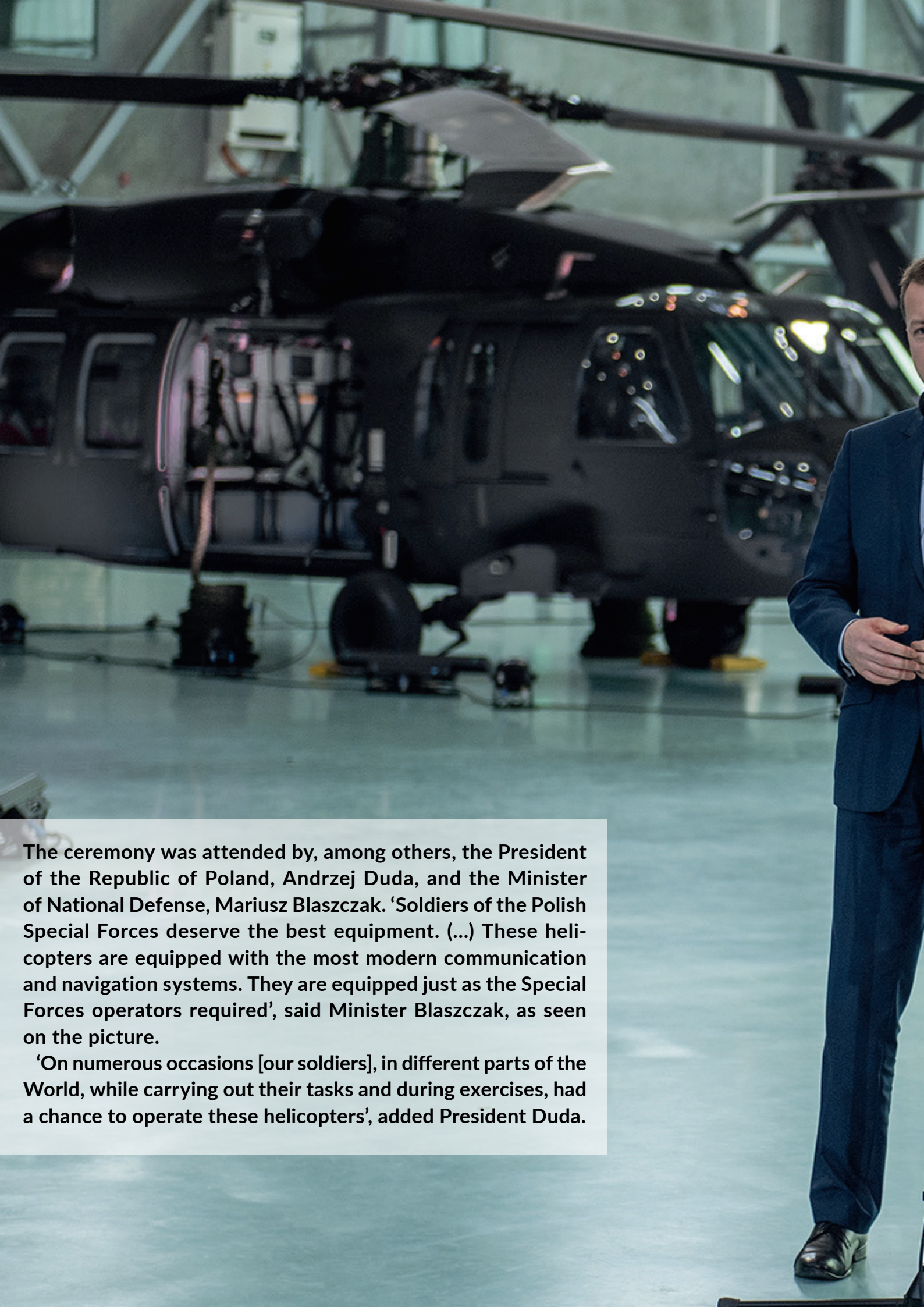
The commissioning of ORP Slazak was preceded by a series of acceptance trials conducted earlier this year. Their main goal was to demonstrate vessel's performance and operational capabilities, including testing of its main systems and onboard equipment, such as the propulsion, observation equipment, like radars, and communications


EXIT

Black Hawks for Polish SF

The Polish Armed Forces have taken delivery of four S-70i Black Hawk helicopters, which will be operated by the Special Forces service. The delivery took place on 20th December at the 1st Airlift Base (1. Baza Lotnictwa Transportowego) in Warsaw

MILMAG
POLISH MoD



The ceremony was attended by, among others, the President of the Republic of Poland, Andrzej Duda, and the Minister of National Defense, Mariusz Blaszczak. ‘Soldiers of the Polish Special Forces deserve the best equipment. (...) These helicopters are equipped with the most modern communication and navigation systems. They are equipped just as the Special Forces operators required’, said Minister Blaszczak, as seen on the picture.

‘On numerous occasions [our soldiers], in different parts of the World, while carrying out their tasks and during exercises, had a chance to operate these helicopters’, added President Duda.

During his speech, President Duda admitted that the requirement of the Polish Special Forces for new transport/multirole helicopters is much bigger than just the 4 platforms, adding that he hopes that Poland will be able to fill this requirement in the near future.

‘So far there are four helicopters. We hope, though, that as long as we operate them and get better acquainted with this equipment, we will be able to grow it in numbers, serving the needs of not only our Special Forces, but also other services’, said President Duda.

New S-70i helicopters, which were manufactured by PZL Mielec, the local subsidiary of Lockheed Martin, will enhance air mobility of the Polish Special Forces. ‘These helicopters were manufactured at PZL Mielec, a place which for many years has been teeming with life of the Polish aviation technology’, said minister Blaszczak.

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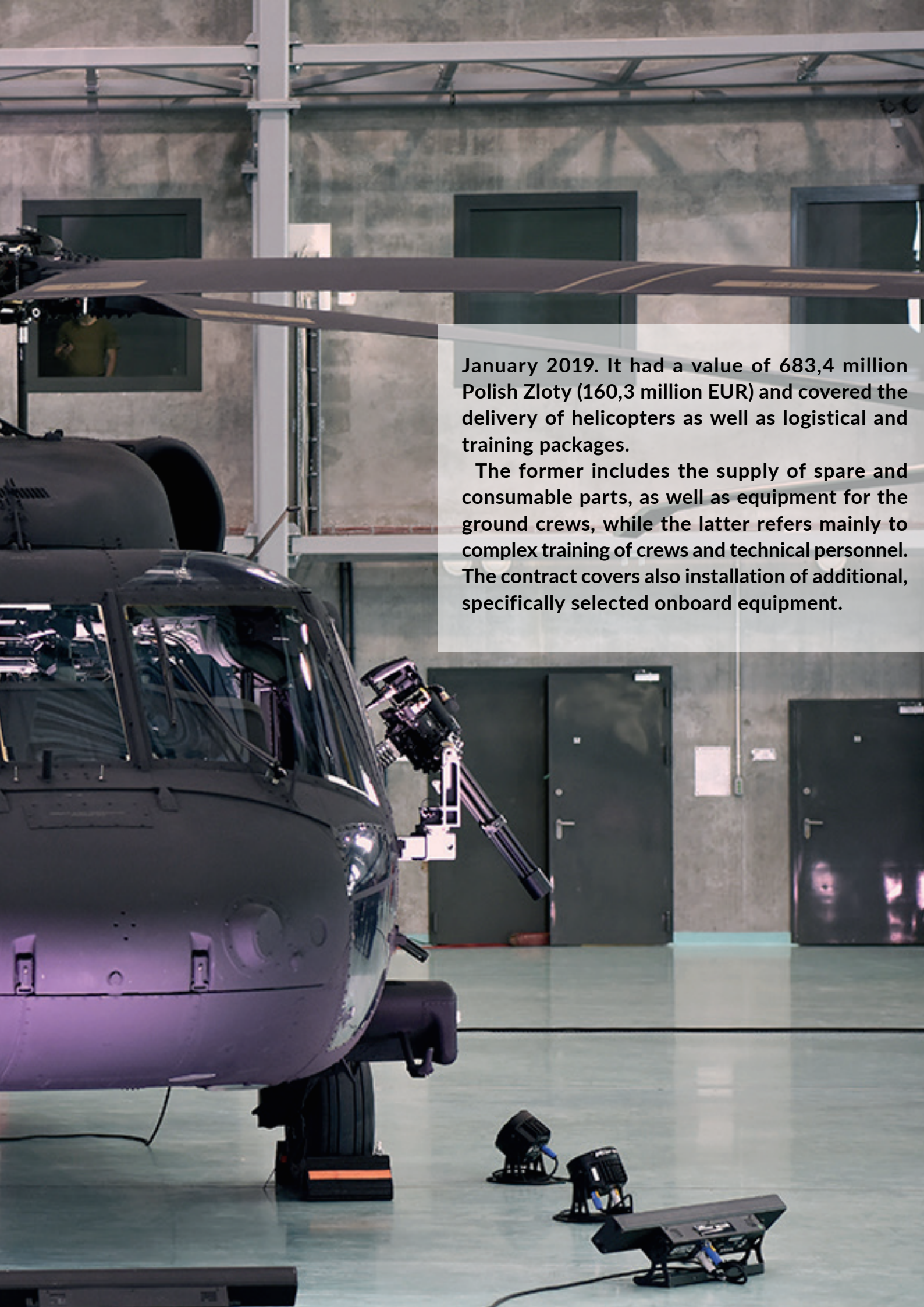

January 2019. It had a value of 683,4 million Polish Zloty (160,3 million EUR) and covered the delivery of helicopters as well as logistical and training packages.

The former includes the supply of spare and consumable parts, as well as equipment for the ground crews, while the latter refers mainly to complex training of crews and technical personnel. The contract covers also installation of additional, specifically selected onboard equipment.

Polish S-70i Black Hawks are armed with 12.7mm FN Herstal M3M (GAU-21) single barrel rapid-fire machine guns and 7.62mm Dillon Aero M134D Miniguns. However, the final SF configuration is yet to be determined by the operator and installed by the manufacturer in the future.


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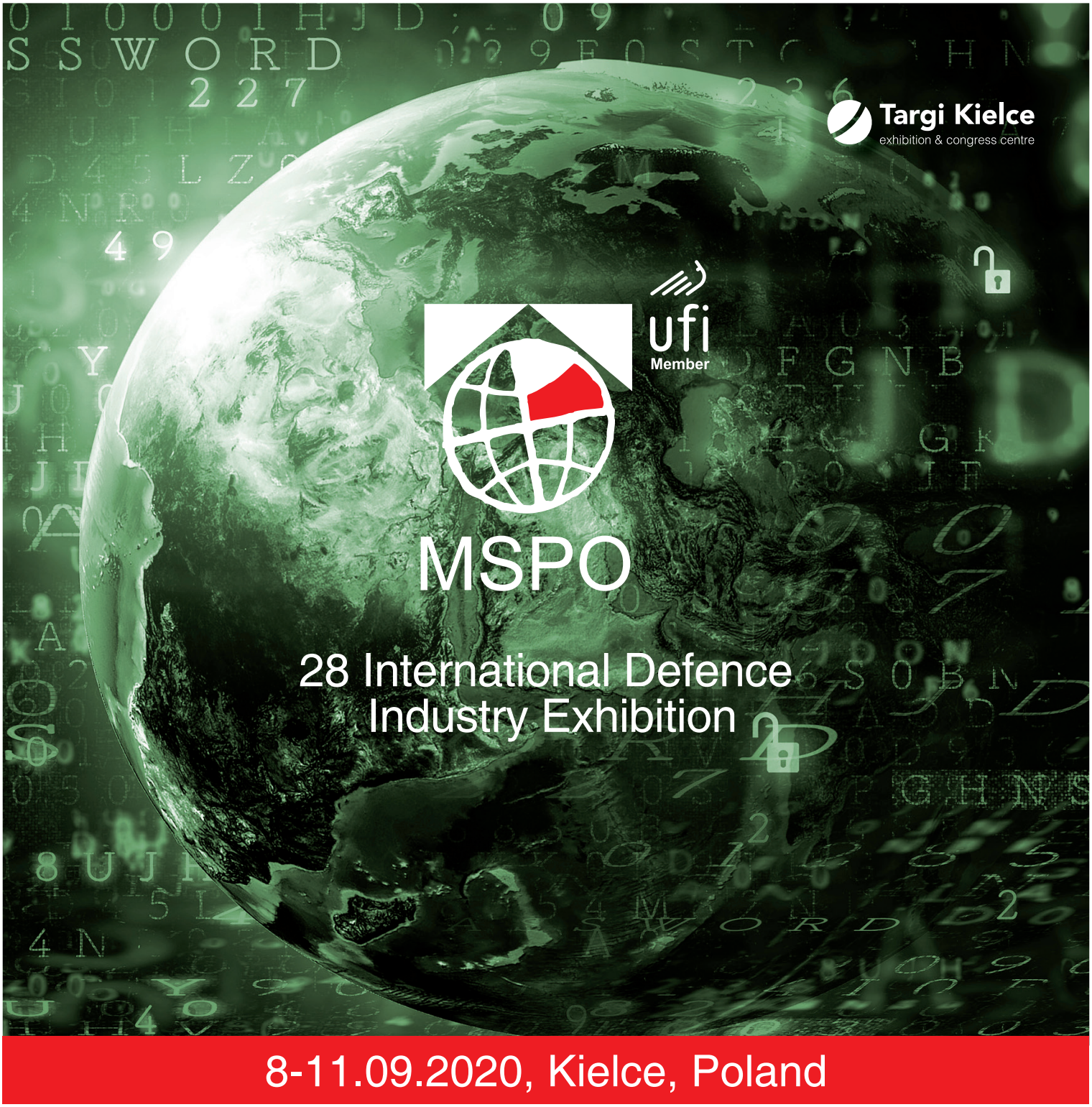
CLOSE



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