

Accelerated introduction of new military procurement law reflects changed priorities in France

15th August 2022 - 11:27 GMT | by Jean-Marc Tanguy in Paris



MM40 Block 3 Exocet launcher aboard the French Navy FREMM frigate Auvergne, pictured in July 2022. (Photo: Jean-Marc Tanguy)

The French government is bringing a new Military Programming Law into force two years ahead of schedule.

In an announcement that surprised some observers, French President Emmanuel Macron declared on 13 July that a new Military Programming Law (LPM) would come into effect by the end of 2022 — two years ahead of schedule.

Macron did drop a heavy hint on 13 June 2022 that reform was on the way. Speaking on the opening day of the Eurosatory defence exhibition in Paris, he called for France to transition into a 'war economy' following a re-evaluation of the current LPM.

The **existing LPM** covers the period 2019-2025 and includes total investment in the armed forces of €295 billion (\$300 billion), with a significant annual increase planned for 2023 (rising from €40.9 billion to €45 billion). Under the current LPM, €50 billion would be allocated for the French military in 2025. However, the new LPM will cover a longer timeframe (2023-2030) with the declared aim to better finance certain projects, although no precise details are available of how much funding will be released.

The French MoD and its DGA procurement arm will probably take the opportunity with the new LPM to shuffle certain priorities discreetly, particularly in terms of naval ammunition where urgent investment is required from 2022 onwards (to the likely benefit of MBDA).

Plans are already in place to modernise the French Air and Space Force from 2025, so it is likely to receive more funding before then. *Shephard* understands that more attention may be given to French Army aviation, given concerns about the availability of **NH90 tactical transport helicopters**, and the **C-130H Hercules** aircraft used by French SOF and the DGSE intelligence service.



Ukrainian artillery unit fires a Caesar 155mm SPH. (Photo: Ukrinform)

Another problem for French defence planners is that export successes and donations to Ukraine are stripping the armed services of important hardware. The air force is **losing 18 Rafale fighter aircraft to Greece** in 2023-2024 and a **dozen more to Croatia** in 2024-2025, for instance (Greece is also buying six new Rafales).

The Indian Navy could also lease at least four Rafale Ms from the French Navy for use aboard the aircraft carrier INS *Vikrant*. As for the French Army, the MoD stated in July that it has donated 'significant numbers' of VAB APCs to Ukraine and a total of 18 Caesar 155mm self-propelled howitzers have been **pledged to Kyiv**, with deliveries having begun in May.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February upended European defence policies, France was seeking to promote domestic defence industry programmes or European cooperation to reduce dependence on the US. However, so many critical capabilities for France are still supplied from the other side of the Atlantic. Examples include **ISR aircraft** (a platform based on the Beechcraft King Air 350) and **tactical UAVs** (General Atomics MQ-9 Reaper and AeroVironment **Puma AE**), while if France were to acquire loitering munitions it would probably have to do so from the US or Israel. Sébastien Lecornu, who replaced Florence Parly as French defence minister on 20 May, is aware of the importance of ties with the UK and met his counterpart Ben Wallace in London on 21 July. Several major Franco-British programmes are in progress, particularly in relation to missiles. **Jointly developed missiles with the UK** will eventually replace the Scalp EG/Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missile and the Exocet anti-ship missile.

The latter is used by France in three versions: the submarine-launched SM-39; the AM39 carried by the Rafale and the ATL2 maritime patrol aircraft; and the MM40 Block 3 variant fired from FREMM multi-mission frigates.