First launch of Sagem AASM missile with terminal laser guidance a success

Paris, July 9th, 2010

On June 17, 2010, Sagem (Safran group) and the French defense procurement agency DGA successfully carried out the first launch of a 250 kg AASM modular air-to-ground weapon with terminal laser guidance, in a demonstrator version.

This new version combining GPS, inertial and laser guidance enables the AASM to engage agile land or sea targets with outstanding accuracy. It joins the current range of Sagem AASM weapons, comprising two versions already qualified on the Rafale fighter: GPS/inertial and GPS/inertial/infrared. The latest version features a laser seeker instead of the infrared imager, plus dedicated algorithms for the terminal phase.

The test launch was carried out at medium altitude by a Rafale multirole fighter. It aimed at a fixed target 25 km away, illuminated by a DHY-307 ground illuminator identical to those used by French army forward observers.

The weapon's guidance was voluntarily initialized by shifting the target's GPS coordinates by about 100 meters. But the weapon hit its target to within less than one meter, thanks to its laser spot detection algorithms and ability to slave its flight path to the laser spot.

This was the first firing test in the world using a laser-guided missile with a vertical terminal phase, enabling full control over impact parameters and minimizing the risks of collateral damage. Because of these characteristics, the laser-guided AASM is especially well suited to urban combat and asymmetrical situations where opportunity strikes are needed.

At the end of 2009, the DGA awarded Sagem a contract for 3,400 AASMs to be deployed by French armed forces, including a firm batch of 680 units. The contract also covers the qualification and production engineering for the INS/GPS/laser version, which will enter production starting in late 2012.

Developed and produced by Sagem, the AASM weapon comprises a guidance kit and range augmentation kit integrated on a standard 250 kg bomb. The AASM family will eventually include 125, 500 and 1,000 kg versions as well. Fired day or night and in all weather conditions, the AASM can be released at low altitude, and can also be fired off-axis, in relation to the aircraft's flight path. The AASM offers very high precision and a terminal phase adapted to its missions, with a range exceeding 50 km.

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Sagem, a high-tech company in the Safran group, holds world or European leadership positions in optronics, avionics, electronics and safety-critical software
for both civil and military markets. Sagem is the No. 1 company in Europe and No. 3 worldwide for inertial navigation systems (INS) used in air, land and naval applications. It is also the world leader in helicopter flight controls and the European leader in optronics and tactical UAV systems. Operating across the globe through the Safran group, Sagem and its subsidiaries employ 6,700 people in Europe, Southeast Asia and North America. Sagem is the commercial name of the company Sagem Défense Sécurité. For more information: www.sagem-ds.com

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