SPECIAL REPORT, Afghanistan

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International Defence Review

Special Report: Exactor, the 'missile that never was', comes in from the cold

Key Points
Exactor is planned to remain in Afghanistan until the end of UK deployments there
A new version optimised for expeditionary operations is expected to be operational soon

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The British Army is shortly to officially receive a new version of a missile system that the UK Ministry of Defence (MoD) has hitherto been reluctant to admit it has. However, the security level of the system, codenamed Exactor, was officially downgraded earlier this year after a succession of disclosures - intentional or otherwise in both official and semi-official media - and in anticipation of the missile becoming a more permanent feature of the British Army inventory.

As intimated in previous reports in *IHS Jane's International Defence Review* , the Exactor urgent operational requirement (UOR) was originally endorsed in April 2007 to provide the British Army with a rapid counter for hostile mortars and other indirect-fire systems that were then being used against it from within built-up areas of Basra, Iraq. The chosen expedient was to acquire the Spike-NLOS (Non Line of Sight) system, originally developed by Rafael for the Israel Defence Forces. However, the production line for the system, known as Tamuz in Israeli service, had already closed and the UK MoD accordingly leased two M113 tracked launch vehicles, and purchased another dozen, direct from Israel Defence Forces warstocks.

The Spike-NLOS Mk5 missile with its dual-mode EO/IR camera seeker on display at DSEI 2013. A semi-active laser seeker can be integrated with the guidance system. (Rupert Pengelley)

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The Spike-NLOS missile, which weighs 71 kg in its launch canister, has a range of some 26 km and is guided by an operator who views the target in the terminal phase by means of a camera in the nose of the missile, connected to the operator's console by a radio frequency (RF) link. Warheads developed for Spike-NLOS include shaped-charge and small-footprint penetration/blast/fragmentation types.

Spike-NLOS launch canisters exhibited at DSEI 2013 alongside an AgustaWestland AW159 Wildcat in Royal Navy colours presage the missile's qualification with ROK Navy Wildcats. It could also provide a fallback or complement for the French/UK Future Anti-Surface Guided Weapon (Heavy) (FASGW[H]) missile, particularly in littoral environments. (Rupert Pengelley)

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Exactor first went into operation with a British close support artillery regiment (1st Regiment Royal Horse Artillery - 1 RHA) in Basra in August 2007, only three months after contract exchange (a period that had included six weeks of crew training). At the end of its tour, 1 RHA was succeeded in its newly acquired role by another close support regiment, 7 RHA.

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