

## EUROPE

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## UK deploys Phalanx C-RAM system to protect forces in Iraq

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- The UK is to deploy the Land-based Phalanx Weapon System to protect forces in southern Iraq against indirect fire
- Acquisition of this capability marks a significant u-turn, the MoD having initially assessed the Phalanx system as "not appropriate for our current requirements"

The UK is to deploy a US-sourced counter-rockets, artillery and mortars (C-RAM) system to protect UK forces in southern Iraq, a senior Royal Air Force (RAF) officer has revealed.

Speaking at the Royal United Services Institute's (RUSI's) Air Power conference in London on 17 May, Air Chief Marshal Sir Clive Loader, Commander-in-Chief of the RAF's Air Command, disclosed that the Raytheon Land-based Phalanx Weapon System (LPWS) was being acquired to protect the UK's deployed bases in operational theatres.

The past six months have seen a dramatic upsurge in insurgent mortar attacks in southern Iraq, prompting urgent action to counter the threat. Last month the UK base at Basra Palace camp alone received a significant number of mortar rounds, according to military sources in Iraq.

ACM Loader showed the RUSI conference a video of C-RAM test firings in the US, illustrating the destruction of a mortar round. This same capability is now to provide protection to UK troops in the Basra area.

Developed by Raytheon Missile Systems for the US Army, the LPWS is a reconfigured variant of the widely sold Phalanx 20 mm shipborne close-in weapon system. Phalanx combines a 20 mm M61A1 Gatling gun with a Ku-band search-and-track radar featuring closed loop spotting.

LPWS is a fully self-contained system - incorporating the Phalanx mounting itself, a generator, cooling system and an enclosed operator station - mounted on a flatbed trailer. To minimise collateral damage, the C-RAM variant fires M-940 self-destruct rounds.

Phalanx was first tested for C-RAM applications in November 2004. It entered service with the US Army the following year and is fully integrated with the service's Forward Area Air Defense (FAAD) command-and-control system.

*Jane's* understands that the UK is initially acquiring a C-RAM capability through the lease of a number of US Army LPWS systems for a six-month period through to mid-November 2007. It has also acquired a single FAAD system.

Raytheon refuses comment on the UK LPWS programme. However, a UK MoD spokesman told *Jane's* that "an equipment solution is being progressed to assist in dealing with the indirect fire threat".

Confirming that the Phalanx system will be used as part of an equipment solution to deliver this capability, the spokesman added: "The rapid progression of the equipment solution identified to provide this capability has been a good example of the urgent operational requirement [UOR] process and ability of the armed forces working together to deliver the equipment needed at the front line."

"Any response to the indirect fire threat must cover, first, tactics and procedures to reduce the threat of indirect fire and second, equipment to monitor and deal with indirect fire."

The decision to acquire the C-RAM capability afforded by LPWS reflects a change of heart by the MoD. In a reply to a parliamentary question on 12 December 2006, armed forces minister Adam Ingram said: "Initial assessments of the Phalanx C-RAM anti-mortar system indicate that it is not appropriate for our current requirements," although he added that the MoD continued to "keep the operational situation under review".

Separately, the MoD has disclosed the award of separate UOR contracts (by the Joint Sensor and Engagement Networks Integrated Project Team) to Lockheed Martin UK and Saab Microwave Systems in respect of an Indirect Fire Locator, Alarm and Intercept System (IFLAIS). Although neither the MoD nor the companies concerned will comment on the scope of supply for the IFLAIS UOR, both contracts are understood to be associated with the provision of improved indirect fire protection for UK forces in Iraq.

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