



Croatia: Cutting its Coat According to its Cloth

Work on C4I is not on the immediate agenda but near term improvements to lethality are being realised and new communications acquisition may move ahead in the next few years

Current work by Croatia in the area of soldier modernisation is, explained Col. Mirko Kukolj, Deputy Head of Directorate, Development, Equipping and Modernisation Dept, Ministry of Defence, continuing at a limited level, focusing on study and fielding equipment in the areas of clothing and food and nutrition. In other areas, considerable work is going to developing lessons learned from bodies such as NATO's LCG/1. Col. Kukolj said, "[Work on C4I] is a little far away from us at the moment."



Croatia has recently fielded a new woodland digital camouflage scheme © AJB

Afghanistan

There has in recent years been considerable focus in terms of operations in Afghanistan. For local communications in that theatre, Croatia has previously used the Motorola GP300 for troops' personal radios.

A similar capability type capability is now being pursued across the armed forces. Col. Kukolj said, "[The requirement] is not defined at the moment. What the soldiers used in Afghanistan was in small quantities specially dedicated for operations out of Croatia. It doesn't mean that the same equipment will be used in Croatia."

The requirement for personal radios is currently being finalised with a procurement potentially beginning in the next two years.

Small arms

In common with a number of militaries in Eastern Europe, while C4I is on the backburner small arms have taken centre stage. Croatia selected the domestically produced VHS (Višenamjenska Hrvatska Strojnica) or Multifunctional Croatian Machine gun for its 5.56x45mm assault rifle requirements.

Col. Kurkolj said, "We have finished with the development of the rifle. They are now developing the grenade launcher for the rifle. We have contacts with the company in Croatia producing the rifle and we have finished with the first 1000 rifles."

"Now we are working on the second version. We have to finish some additional tests to see what is possible to do because this is a bullpup version. One of the problems is for the left hand soldiers. They are now finishing the version for [ambidextrous use]. There are options to see whether it will be easier to change some parts or to adopt a new version for the left handed soldiers."

The first 1000 rifles are split rough 70:30 between the standard VHS-D and the K model short barrel carbine. A total of 16,000 weapons may be ultimately acquired.

The VHS is part of a family of weapons, designed to replace Warsaw Pact era weapons. The first replacement solution was the HS2000 (Hrvatski Samokres) or Croatian Pistol 2000 pistol, which had already been developed at the point at which the decision to proceed with the weapons family was made.

"What we are thinking now is that we will finish the rifle and then start with the machine guns." Col. Kukolj believe that the relatively small number of LMG and GPMGs required by Croatia may make them difficult to be sourced using domestic designs. ■