

ARGENTINE MILITARY RECAPITALIZATION

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In the defense area, a recapitalization policy is being implemented. It is based on the FONDEF tool (which consists of a long-term financing fund for this purpose). This plan provides for a significant purchase for the three armed forces.

In the case of the Army, negotiations are advanced to purchase Guaraní armored vehicles from Brazil, whose chassis engine is manufactured in Argentina—destined to equip a complete mechanized brigade. This adds to a contract with an Israeli company to modernize 75 TAM tanks of Argentine origin that were incorporated into the Army more than four decades ago.

In the last week of October, a contract was signed with the Swedish company SAAB to acquire mobile anti-aircraft missiles, which had been significantly lost in the Falklands War. These missiles are part of a joint system that standardizes the equipment in the three Armed Forces.

In the case of the Navy, a submarine is a priority. After the fatal accident of the San Juan submarine, the Argentine Navy has not had any in service. Various negotiations and proposals on which there is no decision have been considered. However, it could get priority. In addition, Chile has 2 Scorpene submarines in service and Brazil has 2, while it is manufacturing 2 more in a shipyard in Rio de Janeiro. It is a long-term project that considers building a nuclear-powered submarine. The fact that Argentina, Brazil, and Chile have the same type of submarine offers a regional perspective to the weapons system in this field.

During the Macri government, four ocean patrol boats (OPB) were bought from France, which will complete the fleet in a few months and play an important role in the custody of the Argentine Sea. Of the four OPBs, 2 are already incorporated; by the end of the year, the third will be in the country and the fourth will arrive in April 2022, with which the Maritime Patrol Division will be complete. A contract has also been signed with FADEA to modernize the North American Naval Aviation Orion P3 exploration aircraft and new ones could be purchased. These aircraft have maritime patrol tasks as a priority and complete the capabilities of ocean patrols.

In the case of the Air Force, the priority is the multipurpose fighter planes. The last time this type of aircraft was acquired was in the mid-1990s, from the United States. It was the A-4B Skyhawk, which had been used by the United States Marines as air support, and which were modernized at the time, but were out of service for the time that had elapsed. Half of the Skyhawks have been reset and upgraded in the United States. They are in service and have prevented the country from being without air defense. A similar process is underway with another batch of aircraft. However, weapons have not been included after a US decision, a decisive issue.

In the 2022 budget bill, an item of more than 600 million dollars is included to buy a dozen multipurpose fighters. According to the budgeting technique, the names of companies that are considered as possible options are not included in the budget bill.

Proposals from NATO countries such as Sweden and France, from Asia, China and South Korea, and also from Russia have been analyzed, but there is no definition. In the previous government, talks had begun with South Korea to acquire modern fighters in this country, whose military industry is in the orbit of the United States. The version of the Chinese fighter manufactured in Pakistan was considered. Russia also presents an offer. The option of the Swedish Grippen would have a regional logic since Brazil has received its first aircraft in more than a decade of negotiations and will manufacture them in the country. It was a decision of the Lula government. Something that would open a perspective of binational projects.

But the problem is the so-called "English veto", which the United Kingdom uses for the sale of weapons systems that carry British components, preventing certain weapons systems from reaching specific countries, such as Argentina. This led South Korea to suspend the advanced talks it had with Argentina and the same happened with Sweden. The Chinese-Pakistani plane is considered but without a political decision or signing of a pre-contract. The United States would prefer that the Chinese option not be chosen due to its local and international policy aimed at "containing" Chinese influence in strategic sectors.

Based on the "special" relationship between Washington and London, which is still in force in the strategic-military plane, a relaxation in the "English veto" could be a possibility, allowing Argentina to get the South Korean or Swedish plane. The other option would be for the United States to decide to compete against China, offering an equivalent aircraft in terms of price and capabilities. In any case, it is a decision that is still going to take years, as happened with the agreement between Brazil and Sweden for the Grippen plane and, in the best of cases, adopted towards the end of the current government period.

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