

Air Battle Decisive Munitions (ABDM)

Air-to-Ground Precision Guided Munition: Letter of Intent¹ signed	Air-to-Ground Precision Guided Munition: Memorandum of Understanding² signed	1st delivery	Expansion into Air Battle Decisive Munitions
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Participants



What is ABDM?

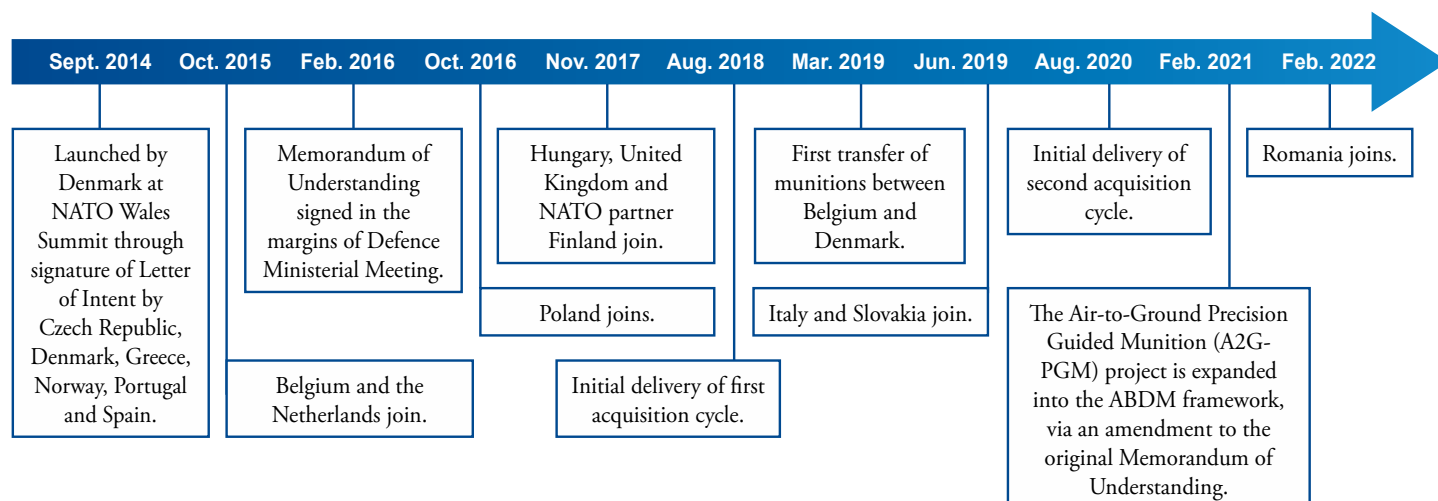
An Air Battle Decisive Munition (ABDM) is any form of munition or explosive, but primarily missiles, rockets and bombs having a decisive effect in an air environment.

Multinational effort

The High Visibility Project³ on Air Battle Decisive Munitions offers participants a cost-effective and flexible way to address all aspects of their munitions needs in the air domain. The scope of the framework was initially limited to air-to-ground precision guided munitions. Following the success of the first and second acquisition cycle, the participants decided to gradually expand the scope of the project into a comprehensive ABDM framework in the margins of the February 2021 NATO Defence Ministers Meeting. The ABDM project is now fully aligned in structure and approach with the corresponding projects in the land and maritime domain – the Land Battle Decisive Munitions and Maritime Battle Decisive Munitions.



First lot of precision guided munitions acquired through the NATO project



There are currently 15 participating nations, of which 14 Allies and one partner nation⁴. The United States actively supports this effort under its Lead Nation Procurement Initiative (LNPI) for any US-sourced munitions to be acquired under this framework. In the initial two acquisition cycles, a single lead actor – in this case the NATO Support and Procurement Agency (NSPA) – acquired US-produced ABDMs on behalf of the participating nations. Participants already received first deliveries of these munitions in August 2018 with per unit acquisition cost being

1 Initial non-binding document outlining participants' will to explore the area in question further.

2 Legally binding document specifying details of cooperation.

3 NATO High Visibility Projects are multinational initiatives tailored to address key capability areas, usually launched at Defence Ministers' level.

4 Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, Greece, Hungary, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

around 15-20 per cent lower than originally forecasted. Deliveries for the second acquisition cycle in 2020 took place up to 12 months ahead of schedule, in addition to delivering comparable cost savings. As a result of these initial success stories, participants are directing an increasing volume of orders toward the ABDM framework.

The US-sourced ABDMs, are being delivered with a blanket third-party transfer agreement, which means that they can be easily shared between the participating nations. This dramatically increases flexibility in stockpile management, because previously the administrative and technical process of transferring munitions could take months. Now, it can be completed in as little as just a few days. Future acquisition cycles are envisioned to also include non-US-sourced ABDMs while delivering similar benefits, and participants may also choose to store their munitions in shared warehouses, thereby further reducing cost.



Procurement process for US-sourced munitions

Why is it important?

The ABDM project seeks to address an issue that NATO first encountered during Operation Unified Protector in Libya, when Allies experienced difficulties with the availability of munitions. During this operation, it was challenging for Allies to share their individual munition stockpiles. The project introduces a new, flexible approach allowing participating nations to share each other's ABDM stocks, therefore making Allied air forces more interoperable. Multinational procurement and potential multinational warehousing in the future mean reduced costs and a more efficient acquisition process.

How does it work?

Many ABDMs are referred to as “smart bombs” due to their ability to precisely hit a designated target by relying on external guidance or its own guidance system. For instance, in an air-to-ground context, GPS, laser guidance, radio frequency or other methods can be used to increase accuracy. The corresponding launch follows a target acquisition cycle, commonly composed of five steps (detection of target area, detection of target itself, orientation of target, target recognition, and weapon release).

Did you know?

1. The United States has been developing a new type of air battle decisive munition that should be able to hit moving targets on land and at sea without the assistance of satellite navigation.
2. Modern long-range air-to-air missiles can hit flying targets at a distance in excess of 100 kilometres.

