

Australia Confirms AARGM-ER Purchase Plan

By Richard Scott

The Australian government has confirmed plans to acquire the AGM-88G Advanced Anti-Radar Guided Missile – Extended Range (AARGM-ER) missile via a Foreign Military Sales (FMS) case with the US government.

In an August announcement, the Australian Department of Defence said it had approved the purchase of “more than 60 [AARGM-ER] missiles from the United States” at a cost of A\$431 million (US\$278.1 million). It added that the AGM-88G weapons would initially equip Royal Australian Air Force F/A-18F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler aircraft, with the service’s F-35A Lightning II to follow in due course.

Being developed by Northrop Grumman to meet US Navy requirements for a fifth-generation compatible SEAD/DEAD effector, AARGM-ER is an upgraded and re-architected missile that marries electronics and software from the AGM-88E2 AARGM missile with an all-new airframe incorporating a larger diameter solid fuel rocket motor and a new tail-controlled control actuation system. While initially being integrated on the F/A-18E/F Super Hornet and EA-18G Growler, the revised missile mold line also enables internal carriage of AARGM-ER inside the weapons bay of the F-35A and F-35C Lightning II variants.

Northrop Grumman has undertaken AGM-88E AARGM-ER engineering and manufacturing development under the terms of a \$322.5 million contract awarded by the Naval Air Systems Command in March 2019. Low-rate initial production deliveries to the US Navy are due to start later this year.

The US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) announced in

February 2023 that the State Department had approved Australia's request to purchase AARGM-ER. The DSCA release indicated that the FMS case covered the acquisition of up to 63 AARGM-ER all-up-round missiles, plus up to 20 AARGM-ER captive training missiles.