Industry Dialogue - Minutes

Procurement of handguns, ammunition and holsters for the standing corps of the European Border and Coast Guard

9-10 December 2019

Done at Warsaw
12/12/2019
General information

On 9 and 10 December, Frontex hosted an Industry Dialogue with the producers and distributors of handguns, ammunition and holsters. The invitation to participate in the Industry Dialogue was published on the Frontex website and open to all relevant parties to express their interest to attend. The following companies indicated interest and were invited to the dialogue: Allies, CENZIN, GLOCK, GRAND POWER, HECKLER & KOCH and RADAR1957. Frontex was represented by staff members from the Research and Innovation Unit (RIU), the Training Unit (TRU), the Pool Resources Unit (PRU), the Field Deployment Unit (FDU) and the Legal and Procurement Unit (LPU). The Dialogue was divided into two sessions, the first one being dedicated to handguns (9 December) and the second to ammunition and holsters (10 December). The main objective of this consultation with the Industry was to gain insights from the market on handguns, ammunition and holsters, listen to prospective bidders’ concerns, and recommendations regarding the eventual future procurement. The agenda of the meeting was distributed and agreed at the beginning of the meeting.

The dialogue was opened by the Research and Innovation Unit. Frontex explained that one of the core changes included in the recently implemented Regulation for the European Border and Coast Guard 2019/18961 foresees the establishment of the standing corps. Frontex has to ensure that the members of the standing corps are properly equipped and trained and are able to operate in the various operational areas. The dialogue with the Industry was organized not only to gain technical knowledge on the topic, but also deeper knowledge about logistics, delivery, maintenance and possible training (lessons learned, background, recommendations, and case studies).

Frontex emphasized that the participation in the Dialogue will not in any way influence the outcome of the eventual procurement process. The discussions carried during the meeting are not binding and aim purely at exchanging information. The information provided by Frontex together with the questions and answers of the dialogue will be published on the Frontex website. This will be done to ensure transparency and equal treatment of economic operators which might be interested to take part in the eventual future procurement of handguns, ammunition and holsters for the standing corps of the European Border and Coast Guard (EBCG).

Information provided on the eventual upcoming procurement

Frontex is considering to launch an open or restricted tender procedure to establish a framework contract for the provision of handguns, ammunition and accessories. If a restricted procedure will be chosen it will be organized in two steps: in the first step only the exclusion and selection criteria will be assessed and in the second step the award criteria will be evaluated. Any interested economic operator may ask to take part in the first step of this procedure, but only those invited can submit a tender that will be evaluated in the second step.

The tender would be published in the Tenders Electronic Daily (TED) portal and the Frontex webpage. The current planning includes launching the procurement in the first quarter of 2020. The core principles which are transparency, equal treatment and non-discrimination, open competition, and sound financial management will be strictly followed.

After the tender is launched economic operators will have the possibility to ask questions through TED. Frontex will most probably request the delivery of the first pieces of equipment still in 2020. Payment conditions will be defined in the draft of the contract and may include: pre-financing, interim payments and balance payment.

Roadmap and general assumptions

Until now Frontex did an extensive consultations with EU MSs focusing on handguns used by law enforcement across Europe. A Request for Information on Handgun and Ammunition was sent out to all EU MSs, followed by a workshop with MSs experts to discuss about national procurements of handguns and the applying legislations. Frontex is currently preparing the procurement documentation.

According to the recently implemented mandate, the standing corps will be statutory staff which will wear uniforms while performing their tasks and exercising their powers. The Frontex Executive Director (ED) may authorize staff to carry and use weapons in accordance with the rules adopted by the Frontex Management Board. Currently, Frontex is recruiting the staff of the standing corps. The standing corps staff is authorized to use their handguns only in cases of self-defense and for the defense of the team members or of other persons in accordance with the national laws of the host Member States. Frontex will pay special attention to deliver the highest standard of firearm trainings. Additionally, the principle of necessity, proportionality and the duty of precaution are explicitly outlined in the Regulation.
The core qualities of the handguns to be procured by Frontex are foreseen to be: reliability, accuracy, safety, all-weather 24/7 operational, functionality, long lifetime, proportional use and force graduation from design.

Frontex presented the participants with the following general assumptions of the prospective procurement:

**Handguns:**
- 9x19 mm
- Compact pistol
- Place for micro holographic sight

**Ammunition:**
- Non-toxic

**Flashlights**
- Permanently mounted

**Holster**
- Possibility to carry handgun with and without flashlight
- Protect from access of third person
- Different mounting positions, belt/waist, platform on the leg, MOLLE system)

**General conclusions derived from the Industry presentations:**

- The export permits allow for the transportation of the order. The entity receiving the order should have the legal power to procure and store handguns and ammunition. It is recommended to make sure, from a legal point of view, that the end-user (Frontex) has all the licenses needed to import the handguns and to distribute to the other MSs, in compliance with EU regulations for firearms import/export;
- Too broad specifications may introduce uncertainty for both parties. But on the other hand, overly detailed specifications might narrow the number of bidders. Ensuring that an appropriate level of precision is applied in describing the products to be bought will lead to both better outcomes and less disputes;
- The representatives emphasized the importance of clear and proper specifications (for example, the type of actions required: double-action, single-action, safe-action, striker action). The clear specifications should not only refer to the handguns but also to all accessories;
• Transparency in terms of providing feedback after the contract is awarded was requested by participants. Frontex stressed that the procurement will be done strictly following all principles including transparency and equal treatment. The unsuccessful tenderers (who are not excluded or rejected from the procedure) will receive their evaluation results and may request information about the name of the winner, the price and the characteristics and relative advantages of the winning tender;

• The Industry representatives emphasized that pre-financing is important, so that small companies are not discriminated;

• It was recommended by participants to use a two-stage procurement process which should include a pre-qualification. For security reason, the wider publication of detailed technical specification should be avoided;

• The verification of undergone testing of handguns, ammunition and holsters, should not be based on written statements provided by the bidders, but should be based on detailed proofs in the form of supporting documents (for example, the outcome of tests, certificates);

• It is important to ensure the compatibility of spare parts within at least the same model;

• It was recommended that the specification of the magazine should be defined in terms of minimum and maximum number of rounds;

• The handguns should undergo regular check-ups and maintenance. It could be done in-house by specialized officers (armorers);

• Training handguns should be acquired, which are more easily transported and are capable to accommodate FX/UTM/CM ammunitions (more safety during training);

• It was recommended that firearms trainings should include real-life situations with FX/UTM/CM simunition;

• The surface treatment on the barrel must be suitable for non-reflective all-weather conditions;

• There are technical solutions that improve the suitability for water, specifically designed for maritime conditions; in these cases, the barrel is different in mechanical tolerances and the resistance to water pressure;

• The handgun should have a safety mechanism to prevent the striker from hitting the primer of the cartridge in case of accidentally dropping it or on impact;

• It was recommended that the trigger weight should be within 4-13 pounds. Lower than 4 pounds is considered unsafe, higher than 13 might be too strong. To be carefully considered also for training handguns;
- It was suggested to make technical specifications for the possible sight accessories, because special mounting slits are needed. Some types of sights might pose risks because are visible from the backside in the night and might make the shooter concentrate on the sight rather than on the target. Red-dot sights are generally perceived as a better solution since tend to concentrate the attention on the target during operations and are a very effective tool during training;
- Red-dot sights increase training efficiency by approx. 30%;
- Regarding the number of mechanical working parts, the lower the better for ease of maintenance, spare parts cost and inventory, and training of armormers;
- Modularity and easy-to-replace-of the hand-grip and the back-stripe are beneficial when adjusting to different conditions (for example wearing gloves) and/or different hand sizes;
- For some producers a durability of 40 000 rounds is perceived as the minimum number of rounds before the maintenance of main parts (like the barrel) is needed. Maintenance on smaller parts can be tolerated after 5 000 shots. Stress-tests for durability can consider up to 180 000-200 000 rounds;
- For Law Enforcement Agencies the magazine capacity is recommended to be in the range of 10-17 rounds;
- A typical number of barrel groves could be 6-8. More advanced barrels are capable to improve the shooting precision and are generally evaluated by the size of the area at 10m shooting distance by expert shooters;
- The handgun should be compatible with adds-on including flashlight and sights.

Information regarding holsters and ammunition which should be taken into consideration:

- Different production processes depending on the chosen materials (KYDEX, boltares, leather, synthetic textile and other types of holsters shells), quantities, volumes and costs;
- Type of operating environment, operational scenarios, job profiles;
- Main characteristics of the holster: reliability, durability and safety;
- Latest innovation came with injections moldings and the use of 3D technology;
- Spacing on the belt, weight on the belt;
- Security system 1, 2, locking systems or retention;
- Thumb or index activated, or both;
- Carry system, belt only, leg-MOLLE modular;
- Weight concern or bulkiness;
- Quick release for different uses (for example when regularly undergoing security scanning);
• Working in low light conditions (tactical lights, use of RMR device);
• Other equipment carried on the duty belt: restraining items: handcuffs, webbing straps, less lethal equipment (Taser, pepper spray, rubber bullets) and first aid kit;
• Safariland retention levels are commonly used as reference;
• The choice of ammunition should address Frontex needs, which should be clearly defined;
• The European Commission is currently drafting a directive which will not allow lead ammunition (planned to come into force 2024). The most recommended ammunition was TFMJ ammunition 8 g;
• 9mm 124 grain is considered standard;
• Suggested storage time less than one year;
• Ammunition for self-defense shooting should avoid over-penetration;
• Ammunition testing is worth considering. Wojskowy Instytut Techniczny Uzbrojenia (WITU) was recommended as having high quality standards for ammunition testing;
• The usage of heavy primer, lacquered primer or dirty powders might cause some damage to the firing pin or the striker block over time, however typically detected after tens of thousands rounds.
• When purchasing the flashlight it is beneficial to look not only at lumen, but also lux parameters;
• In case of framework contract, purchasing bigger quantities of ammunition might decrease pricing.

Questions and answers

Question (Q): Time to deliver samples for the tender procedure (approx. 5 units)?

A (Answer): No issues reported, as a sample delivery can be done very fast. A sample delivery to Frontex HQ will require export permit that allows the export of those goods described on the permit. In case of Frontex keeping the sample, it will require a permanent permit. In case of Frontex sending the samples back to the provider, it will require a temporary permit, which takes less time to issue. However, manufacturers prefer the former, as the samples are used and might be damaged during the testing.

Q: Delivery time: Reasonable time from order till delivery and if possible still in 2020 (approx. 1000 units plus the initial spare parts kit)?
A: The delivery time may range from a few weeks up to even more than 12 months after receipt of an order. Delivery times may vary depending on the production methods used (mainly related to the holsters), production schedule of the manufacturer and priority given to the order.

Q: Logistics: Possibility to deliver orders to multiple locations within the EU (approx. 100 units)?

A: The delivery to multiple locations is time consuming and might trigger complex paperwork depending on the national legislations of the place of delivery. Frontex assumes at the moment that the total price of the procurement would include the costs of shipping which might be to a single location in Poland or to different locations in Europe.

Q: Manufacturing process: technical possibility to add the visual identity of our organization to the handgun?

A: No issues reported.

Q: What is industry’s experience with the public procurements involving deliveries to different locations?

A: No issues reported with deliveries to Poland. Some countries like Hungary and Romania require police escort for transporting batches of weapons. National legal requirements vary across Europe and are prone to change over time.

Q: Warranty: typical warranty provisions (what is covered, warranty period, etc.)?

A: Factory warranty is often up to two years. Some manufacturers offer lifetime warranty to at least some parts of the handguns. It is important to clearly define warranty in the procurement documentation.

Q: Spare parts: availability of spare parts; typical times/numbers?

A: The availability of spare parts should be defined in the procurement documentation within the reason, the usual one begin from 10 up to 25 years.

Q: To which parts of the tender procedure special attention should be paid?

A: Providing supporting documents to proof the testing of handguns and ammunition. In general the focus of the testing should be given to those characteristics which Frontex considers the most important based on operational usage of the equipment. The testing should be based on measurable criteria. It was recommended to test for water and extreme weather (laboratory or end user test).
Other common testing criteria are weight with and without magazine, drop test, external safety which depends on the end user requirements and training.

**Q: What kind of trainings do you recommend?**

A: The training for armorer was strongly recommended, preferably at the provider’s location.

**Q: What are the most common standards for handguns?**

A: Advised safety procedures for handguns: C.I.P., SAAMI or NATO standards.