

CASE-01 · DEFENSE & PROCUREMENT

€1.2 billion for the «X-class» heavy weapon, before the budget window closes

There is a gap to fill in defense and a long-standing supplier ready to fill it with a powerful platform. The political and budget window is open now, and everyone is pushing to sign.

THE JUDGMENT

yes → conditional yes

CALIBRATED CONFIDENCE

48%

SECTOR

Defense



EXECUTIVE VERDICT

You're buying the weapon of the **last war**.

THE CALL

yes → conditional yes

CONFIDENCE

48%

IN ONE LINE

Avoided a **€1.2 bn** commitment on a weapon that a mass attack could have neutralized; requirement realigned to the real threat.

§ THE PROTAGONIST & THE CONTEXT

The director-general of armaments, with the budget window open and three generals pushing to sign before the end of the quarter.

A mid-sized defense ministry on a procurement cycle that opens every five years. The supplier — a long-standing national partner — has already invested in pre-production. Refusing now means renegotiating from scratch in five years, possibly with a foreign vendor.

§ BACKGROUND

Over the past two years, adversary military doctrine has shifted markedly toward low-cost unmanned aerial vehicle swarms: purchased by the hundreds, deployed to saturate point-defense systems. Adversary budgets for heavy platforms, by contrast, are contracting. Recent NATO exercises simulating multiple simultaneous low-altitude attacks revealed saturation limits in traditional intercept systems at just sixteen concurrent targets. The commercial-drone-to-military-adaptation market has grown 340% in three years; the unit cost of a sacrificeable carrier has halved.

§ COUNTER-INTUITIVE SCENARIO

What if we were buying the weapon of the **previous** war? The threat is shifting toward cheap drone swarms, built to be sacrificed by the thousand. Against them a heavy platform is huge, hugely expensive to operate and easy to saturate: twenty arrive at once, you can't stop them all. The real gap to fill is **defense against swarms** — not another behemoth.

IMPLICIT ASSUMPTIONS

- ◆ That gap will still be the right problem in 15 years and beyond.
- ◆ The supplier will manage to source military components for the whole duration.
- ◆ Politics and budgets will stay stable for the entire program.

FALSIFICATION TESTS

- ◆ Does it withstand more than twenty simultaneous low-cost attacks? If not, the thesis collapses.
- ◆ Where has the adversary put its money over the last two years: swarms or heavy platforms?
- ◆ Two components come from a single supplier: in case of tension, how many months of waiting?

QUESTIONS THAT RAISE THE BAR

- ◆ How much does it cost to stop a drone worth a few thousand euros? At what point is it no longer sustainable?
- ◆ If the supplier runs out of microchips, what is plan B — and how ready is it really?

CALIBRATED CONFIDENCE & PROVENANCE

that the «yes» holds without first redefining what we actually need

Provenance: adversary military doctrine (open sources) · requirements document · supplier risk register · internal red-team base (confidential).

Cost per intercept: X-class vs anti-swarm

ILLUSTRATIVE DATA

X-class (interceptor missile)

€320k

Anti-swarm system (laser/RF)

€4.2k

Estimated unit cost to neutralize a single target under each defensive architecture (illustrative data).

Simulated saturation at 16 targets

ILLUSTRATIVE DATA

16

SIMULTANEOUS TARGETS
BEFORE SATURATION

In recent NATO exercises, traditional intercept systems reached their saturation limit at 16 simultaneous targets — against operational swarms of 40–80 units. Over the same period, the commercial-drone-to-military-adaptation market grew 340% in three years.

OUTCOME

Order suspended. Before full commitment: added an anti-swarm program and a **second supplier** for the critical components.

VALUE

Avoided a **€1.2 bn** commitment on a weapon that a mass attack could have neutralized; requirement realigned to the real threat.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE — READ FIRST

Composite cases, in the method of the Harvard Business Review: reconstructions based on real, recurring situations in each sector, merged and anonymized to protect confidentiality. The decision dynamics are authentic; names, figures and details are altered and not traceable to any single client or case. The «provenance» notes describe the type of evidence the engine cites with traceability in production. The Δ -CSI values illustrate the intensity of the pressure the contradiction put on the assumptions.