

Contract signed and more details on the Centauro II for Brazil

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On [25 November 2022](#) the Comando Logístico (COLOG) / Diretoria de Material of the Brazilian Army announced the selection of the winner of the bid for the service 8×8 armoured combat vehicle, defined in Brazil as the Viatura Blindada de Combate de Cavalaria Média Sobre Rodas, VBC CAV – MSR 8X8 in short. The choice went for the Centauro II armoured car armed with a 120 mm smoothbore gun produced by the consortium known as CIO, the acronym for Consorzio Iveco Oto Melara, the two entities being now known as IDV and Leonardo.

The contract signing, originally scheduled for December 5th, was postponed due to a lawsuit presented by the representative of a group of citizens to the Federal Regional Court of the 1st Region. On December 14th the Supreme Tribunal of Justice rejected that suspension, giving therefore the green light to the contract signature, which includes the first two systems to be delivered as soon as possible for further trials. Although not announced officially, EDR On-Line understood that the contract was signed on December 15th.

One of the key factors that led to the choice of the CIO product is that it is already entering service with the Italian Army, first vehicles being tested at the Cavalry School in Lecce, the School being also responsible to draft the technical and tactical procedures (TTPs) for the use of the new generation Centauro, which leverages the experience acquired with the Centauro, born as a true mobile gun system (MGS) as it was meant to replace M47 tanks deployed in the Italian Army territorial defence brigades during the Cold War era. The first Centauro were delivered in the early 1990s, the Centauro having seen operational service in many theatres, starting from Somalia in 1993 up to recent deployments, some being still deployed in Lebanon within the Italian contingent of UNIFIL 2. The Italian Army intent is to replace the Centauro with the Centauro II in seven Cavalry Regiments, which will receive 14 vehicles each (with the exception of the unit part of the Parachute Brigade that will receive 10).



The Centauro II can therefore be defined as a MOTS (Military Off-The-Shelf) system, and this has certainly been a plus in the Brazilian choice, together with the fact that it is armed with a 120 mm gun,

currently the state of the art in tank gunnery, awaiting future developments. Another element that should have favoured the selection of the CIO system is that IDV's Brazilian branch, Iveco do Brazil, has an assembly plant in Sete Lagoas that is currently busy in assembling the Guarani 6×6 vehicle. This led the Italian system to beat the other competitor in the short list, as the LAV 700 AG, proposed by General Dynamics Land Systems of the USA, and the ST1-BR proposed by Norinco of China.

According to information acquired by EDR On-Line, the Centauro II configuration selected by the Brazilian Army is very similar to the one being delivered to the CIO national customer, however they will differ under some key aspects. The add-on armour package will be different, no details on the protection level being available, while Brazil will not adopt the semi-automatic ammunition loading system installed on [Italian Army](#) vehicles. This means that 120 mm ammunition will be handled in the conventional manner, as it is done on most western MBTs. Communication systems will include L3Harris RF-7800V VHF radios as well as additional Thales communications systems.



Although numbers are not available, the percent of national content included in the contract will be considerable. As usual initial vehicles will be produced in the country of origin, which allows speeding up the first deliveries as well as train key Brazilian personnel who will then lead the work in Latin America. The first two Centauro II that must be delivered from the contract signature are nearly ready, as these are being taken from the Italian Army production line,. Further seven vehicles to be used for operational evaluation should also be produced in Italy while local assembly should start in the following batches. EDR On-Line understood that the chassis should be assembled in Sete Lagoas, at the Iveco do Brazil facility while the HITFACT MkII turret, designed and produced by Leonardo, should be assembled in Rio de Janeiro, although the exact production scheme is still under definition. This might put Leonardo in a good position in the bid for the modernisation of part of the Brazilian Army Leopard 1s. Currently the service fields 375 such MBTs among Leopard 1 BEs, acquired from the Belgian Army, and Leopard 1A5BRs; the latest requirement calls for the modernisation of 52 such MBTs the timeline looking at an initial delivery in 2024, the final tank to be handed over in 2030, when a possible decision for a successor might be taken. Having a common turret between the wheeled MGS and the MBT might reduce the logistic footprint as well as training issues.



Back to the Centauro II, which facility will be selected for the final assembly is not know, although that of Sete Lagoas looks to the most probable choice. It is to note that the same turret is being proposed by Leonardo for modernising the Leopard 1. [IMBEL](#), the Indústria de Material Bélico do Brasil, property of the national Ministry of Defence, will be in charge of producing 120 mm ammunition in its Fábrica de

Juiz de Fora, Minas Gerais, while AEL Sistemas based in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, part of the Elbit Group, is the candidate to be responsible of simulation systems.

As said the first two Centauro II to be delivered to the Brazilian Army are being taken from the Italian production line. 2 Centauro II will in fact remain in Italy,. Brazilian personnel will then remain in Italy and will carry out firing trials in Italian ranges and follow closely all acceptance tests carried out by the Italian Army, in order to decide how much of the Italian procedure can be considered also for the Brazilian validation process. When this phase will be finished the vehicles will be transferred to the Brazilian Army CAEX (Centro de Avaliações do Exército) in Rio de Janeiro that will conclude the validation process.



According to available information the first 42 vehicles should be delivered to the 1st Mechanised Cavalry Brigade based in Santiago, Rio Grande do Sul, followed by the 4th Mechanised Cavalry Brigade based in Dourados, Mato Grosso do Sul, while the last 14 should go to the 1st Jungle Infantry Brigade based in Boa Vista, Roraima. The current plan foresees deliveries until 2038, however EDR On-Line understood that the intention is to shorten the timeline, 2038 becoming the delivery date for the last vehicle should Brazil decide to increase the unumber of Centauro II to the original one, which was indicated in 221.

No indications of cost were released, however knowing the average price of such systems and adding a 20-25% for Integrated Logistic Support, an estimate between 600 and 1,000 million Euro should be a credible guess.