

## Weststar wins RM500m military 4x4 job

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Weststar Group will replace all the 3,600 units of the Armed Forces' Land Rover Defender four-wheel drives (4WDs) with its 4x4 GS Cargo for a contract sum of RM500 million. Its Group Senior Vice President, Automotive, Datuk Nik Hamdam Nik Hassan said the replacement programme would be in batches for the next three to five years.

"We have started supplying to Ministry of Defence (Mindef) and have delivered 11 units. We are currently building 10 units. The ministry has ordered 100 units for this year," he told Bernama in an interview on the sidelines of the 13th Defence Services Asia 2012 (DSA 2012) here today. Nik Hamdam said the base vehicles will be coming from Thailand but the whole upgrading, modification and fabrication according to military specifications will be done in Malaysia with 40 per cent local parts.

Even though the contract was signed last year, he said the company was unable to deliver many units last year due to a shortage in supply parts coming from Thailand but is confident of delivering more this year. In addition, Weststar is also pushing for its weapon platform, a specialised vehicle that is configured to carry various types of weapons with four crews, he said. "We are still waiting for Mindef to decide whether our vehicle is suitable for military application. We are now pitching to become the prime contractor to supply the weapon platform for Mindef," he said. Nik Hamdam said the company's facility in Pattaya, Thailand has just completed 40,000 units of weapon platform delivery to the Afghanistan military police. Besides Malaysia and Afghanistan, Weststar has also provided vehicles for military use to the United States, Singapore and Thailand. The company has also supplied the Malaysian government previously via subsidiary Weststar LDV, a joint venture with the now-insolvent UK firm LDV, which provided customised panel vans and transporters specifically for government agencies and services.

Besides automotive, Weststar is also involved in aviation business, which was currently its major contributor accounting for 60 per cent of group revenue, Nik Hamdam said. The remaining contribution came from automotive business, he added. The DSA 2012, which saw the participation of 850 companies, ended its four-day forum and exhibition today. -- Bernama