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## Shooting range direct orders needed to complete project in time for shooting world cup, Clifton Grima says

Two direct orders amounting to €5 million were justified, insists Sport Parliamentary Secretary Clifton Grima • The range has to be ready for June's shooting world cup in Malta



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by Yannick Pace

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Sport Parliamentary Secretary Clifton Grima

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Two direct orders amounting to €5 million, awarded by Sport Malta, for works carried out on the shooting range were necessary for the project to be completed in time for June's shooting world cup, according to Sport Parliamentary Secretary Clifton Grima.

The shooting range is still under construction at Ta' Kandia in the limits of Siggiewi and is necessary for Malta to be able to host the shotgun shooting world cup in four months' time.

On Monday, Grima faced a barrage of questions from Nationalist Party leader Adrian Delia on why the two contracts - which amounted to roughly €2.5 million each - were awarded through a negotiated procedure, rather than by tender.

One of the contracts related to the purchasing of a net which allows lead pellets from shots to be contained within a particular area. The second involved the construction of the backstop for the net, as well as other structural works on the shooting range site, including levelling of the ground, the construction of a water collection system, and the construction of a shooting pit tunnel.

Speaking to MaltaToday, Grima said that the contract for the net was awarded to a supplier because he was the only one that could supply it, while the second was awarded on the basis that it needed to be completed urgently.

In both cases, he said, the secretariat observed the subsidiary legislation that allows such procedures.

The regulations define a negotiated procedure as a "procedure whereby contracting authorities consult the economic operators of their choice and negotiate the terms of a contract with one or more of these."

According to Article 151 of the regulations, there are four instances in which a negotiated procedure can be used. The law says that the negotiated procedure can be applied in situations where the work can only be supplied by one operator "when competition is absent for technical reasons".

The Shotnet, said Grima, was a very specific product, which consists of a 365-m long net that could be electronically raised to a height of 15m.

"When the shooting federation and the government departments were looking for suppliers of the system they couldn't find any others," Grima said. He added that the net meant that a permanent 20m-high wall would not have to be constructed.

Pressed on whether it was possible that only one company could supply the required net, Grima said that he was not an expert himself, but had been informed that this was the case.

In the second instance, Grima pointed out that the law allowed a negotiated procedure to be used when it "is strictly necessary, for reasons of extreme urgency". The regulations state that such urgency needs to be brought about by "unforeseeable events" or when the timeframes required for normal tendering procedures can't be complied with.

"Issuing a tender would take between six to eight months," said Grima, who pointed out that the shooting range needed to be completed in time for the ISSF world cup, which Malta will be hosting in June.

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He said that despite having been awarded through a negotiated procedure, a number of contractors had been approached and asked to submit an offer for the works. The most competitive price had been selected, he said.

The announcement that Malta would be hosting the shooting world cup was made towards the end of 2014, and when asked whether the urgency to finish the project could have been avoided, Grima said the Ta' Kandia range had only been announced last May.

“We needed 26 acres, that’s no joke and finding a site was not an easy task,” Grima said, pointing out that he had been appointed parliamentary secretary after last June’s general election, and that he had immediately set about applying for the necessary permits.

He insisted that his secretariat had been in constant communication with the contracts department despite the fact that he could not show any documentation proving this was the case.

“In this case I am the politician and I will carry political responsibility for the work that has been done,” he said. “I obviously knew there would eventually be a parliamentary question once the project was completed.”

Grima said he expected the shooting range to be completed between April and May, in time to host an event before the world cup started. “It will be a miracle, for us to have finished a project like this in only eight months.”



Yannick Pace was a MaltaToday reporter between 2016-2020

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