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India signs contract with U.S. firm for 72,400 assault rifles

After repeated attempts to equip the infantry soldier with a basic rifle, the Army on February 12 signed a contract with Sig Sauer of the U.S. for 72,400 SIG 716 assault rifles for the frontline soldier deployed in operational areas.

“A contract for procurement of 72,400 assault rifles through Fast Track Procurement (FTP) was signed with Sig Sauer of U.S. on February 12,” the Defence Ministry said in a statement.

Of the 72,400 rifles, 66,400 are for the Army, 2,000 for the Navy and 4,000 for the Indian Air Force. The broad parameters for the assault rifle are an effective range of 500m and weigh less than 3kg. The entire quantity would be delivered within 12 months from the date of signing the contract.

According to information on the company website, the SIG 716 features an improved gas system, lightweight handguard, and an overall weight reduction of more than two pounds and weighs 3.9 kg. The deal for carbines is also in an advanced stage.

However, these are only a small part of the small arms requirement of the Army. The new assault rifles will replace the indigenous INSAS (Indian National Small Arms System) rifles in use and are meant for troops deployed in forward and counter insurgency areas.

Separate tenders are under way for 5.5 lakh assault rifles and 3.5 lakh carbines, bulk of them to be procured from the Indian industry under ‘Buy and Make (Indian)’ category and a small share from the Ordnance Factory Board (OFB).

In January 2018, the Defence Acquisition Council approved initial approval for the procurement of 72,400 assault rifles and 93,895 carbines at an estimated cost of ₹3,547 crore on fast track basis. The assault rifles are of 7.62mm calibre while the Carbines will be of 5.56mm calibre. The deal for carbines is in an advanced stage.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/india-signs-contract-with-us-firm-for-72400-assault-rifles/article26250100.ece>

IAF in talks with Russia for urgent MiG 29 purchase

The negotiations are being carried out under the government-to-government pact with Russia. The plan to acquire 21 additional aircraft to make a new squadron of MiG 29 jets that were first purchased in the 1980s is expected to cost the Indian exchequer less than Rs 6,000 crore, government sources said

By Manu Pubby

New Delhi: Indian Air Force, which is facing an acute shortage of combat aircraft, is in advance talks with Russia for an urgent procurement of MiG 29 fighters that can be delivered at a relatively short notice.

The plan to acquire 21 additional aircraft to make a new squadron of MiG 29 jets that were first purchased in the 1980s has been discussed in detail last month and is expected to cost the Indian exchequer less than Rs 6,000 crore, government sources said.

This would come to Rs 285 crore per jet that would include weapon systems, training and other supporting equipment required for a new squadron. The negotiations are being carried out under the government-to-government pact with Russia. The MiG 29s, if procured, will cost significantly lesser than the Rafale fighter

jets that have been contracted at over ₹1,611 crore per jet. However, the fighters are of an older generation and will not be produced afresh.

Sources said the fighters have been lying mothballed and the plan is to have them upgraded to the latest standard that would include air-to-ground capabilities, extended range and a new avionics and weapons package. "A very reasonable price has been shared and we are considering and evaluating the offer. A bilateral meeting was held last month," sources told ET.

The talks have gained strength as the Air Force faces a depleting fighter squadron strength that has now dwindled to just 31 against the sanctioned strength of 42. Even with the 36 Rafale jets on order, the strength is expected to nose-dive over the next three years as several legacy MiG 21 and 27 squadrons go offline.

The Air Force currently operates three squadrons of the Russian fighter jets that are being upgraded in-house at its Base Repair Depot. While the multi-role jets have been operating since the 1980s, the air force had signed a ₹3,850 crore deal in 2008 to upgrade the entire fleet and give it a life extension.

According to the defence ministry, the upgraded aircraft are now being used for routine operations in frontline squadrons and are equipped with the "state-of-the-art avionics, an array of smart air-to-air and air-to-ground weapons and in-flight refuelling".

The Indian Navy too operates the naval version of the MiG 29, with the jets being the primary weapon of the INS Vikramaditya aircraft carrier. The navy has a total of 45 of the MiG 29K/KUB fighters in service, the last of which were ordered in 2010.

<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/iaf-in-talks-with-russia-for-urgent-mig-29-purchase/articleshow/67968978.cms>

THE ASIAN AGE

Wed, 13 Feb 2019

No sovereign guarantee pact with Russia, says VR Chaudhari

India is also in talks to buy unused fighter aircraft MiG-29 from Russia to boost its depleting fleet

By Pawan Bali

New Delhi: Amid controversy that government waived-off guarantees and anti-corruption clauses for Rafale fighter aircraft deal with France, Air Marshal V.R. Chaudhari, Deputy Chief of Air Staff, said on Tuesday that there is no sovereign guarantee and integrity pact signed with Russians for S-400 missile defence system.

Meanwhile, India is also in talks to buy unused fighter aircraft MiG-29 from Russia to boost its depleting fleet. "There is no sovereign guarantee or integrity pacts signed with the Russians for S-400," said Air Marshal during a press conference on the IAF's fire power demonstration Vayu Shakti 2019 at Phokran ranges later this week.

The statement comes at a time when a political controversy has erupted over a media report about Indian government having made concessions by allegedly dropping some key clauses relating to anti-corruption penalties and sovereign guarantee in the Rafale fighter jet deal with France.

"When agreement is signed or agreed at the level of heads of two states, there is an assurance from the other that if there is any problem, they will take care of it. So there is no need for sovereign guarantee as you get assurance from the head of a state. You can't ask him now gives us this in writing," said defence sources.

IAF's Vice Chief Air Marshal Anil Khosla said that Rafale will give a boost to India's capability and it is a good aircraft. He said that India have had a lot of acquisitions from Russians and Americans earlier. "The process of the government-to-government agreement with Russia and America are generally already streamlined, or should I say evolved."

<http://www.asianage.com/india/all-india/130219/no-sovereign-guarantee-pact-with-russia-says-vr-chaudhari.html>

Navy utility helicopters to be Made in India: Ministry of Defence issues EoI

***India is also in talks to buy unused fighter aircraft MiG-29 from Russia to boost its depleting fleet
The Indian Companies have been given two months to respond to the EoI, and the foreign
OEMs have been given three months for responding due to the nature of inputs required***

The Ministry of Defence has issued Expression of Interest (EoI) for short-listing of potential Indian Strategic Partners and foreign OEMs for procuring Rs 21,738-crore 111 Naval Utility Helicopters (NUH) for the Indian Navy where 60% of the helicopter will be indigenised.

This is in line with the approval the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC) headed by defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman had given for “platform-specific” guidelines for the purchase of 111 naval utility helicopters under the ‘Strategic Partnership’ model to replace the Navy’s outdated fleet of French-designed Chetak choppers.

Indian companies including Tata Advanced Systems Ltd., Mahindra Defence, Adani Defence, L&T, Bharat Forge and Reliance Infrastructure are likely to participate in the process. The foreign OEMs expected to participate include US aerospace giant Lockheed Martin, Airbus Helicopters, Bell Helicopters of the US and M/s RoE.

The DAC had discussed and approved implementation guidelines for key projects under the model to boost the indigenous defence sector and ensure timely delivery of military equipment. These helicopters will be replacing Chetak Helicopters and utilised for albeit SAR, CASEVAC, LIMO, passenger roles and torpedo drops.

According to the Indian Navy, 95 helicopters out of 111 will be manufactured in India by the selected Indian Strategic Partner under Make in India initiative of the government. Once the NUH project is finalised, 16 helicopters will be bought in a flyaway condition from a foreign military contractor, and the remaining 95 will be built in the country in partnership with an Indian firm.

While the MoD and Indian Navy website is hosting the request for EoI from Indian private companies for participating in the project and the EoI from foreign OEMs has been forwarded to companies that had participated in the RFI (Request for Information) discussions.

These OEMS have been authorised to set up dedicated manufacturing line, including design, integration and manufacturing processes for NUH in India and make Indian Manufacturing Line as a global exclusive facility for the NUH platform being offered. The Indian Companies have been given two months to respond to the EoI, and the foreign OEMs have been given three months for responding due to the nature of inputs required. The down select of the Indian companies will be based on their capability of system of system integration, facility in the aerospace domain and financial capability. And once the detailed responses have been received, the MoD will issue the RfP towards the end of third quarter.

The Strategic Partnership (SP) Model is expected to give a push to several big-ticket projects, including those for building next-generation submarines, fighter planes and helicopters in the country. According to the MoD all the procurements under the SP would be executed by specially constituted Empowered Project Committees to provide focused attention and ensure timely execution.

The Indian Navy will use these helicopters for search and rescue operations, medical evacuation, communication duties, anti-piracy and anti-terrorism operations, humanitarian assistance, surveillance and targeting.

<https://www.financialexpress.com/defence/navy-utility-helicopters-to-be-made-in-india-ministry-of-defence-issues-eoi/1485436/>

MoD seeks bids for 111 Navy utility helicopters

The Ministry of Defence on Tuesday asked Indian and foreign companies to submit an expression of interest to make specialised naval copters. Called the naval utility helicopters (NUH), the MoD wants 111 of these.

The MoD has asked foreign companies and also potential Indian companies which will be their 'strategic partners' to submit bids or expression of interest (EoI).

The new ones will replace Chetak helicopters and will be utilised for search and rescue, casualty evacuation, light maritime operations, passenger roles and also dropping torpedo.

Out these 111 copters, 95 will be manufactured in India by the selected strategic partner. The case was approved by the Defence Acquisition Council (DAC). The project worth Rs 21,738 crore is likely to provide a 'Make in India' initiative and fillip to manufacturing capability for helicopters in India.

At present, Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is the only company producing copters. The request for EoI from Indian private companies for participating in the project has been hosted on the MoD website. The foreign manufacturers have been mandated to set up dedicated manufacturing line, including design, integration and manufacturing processes, for NUH in India.

Prospective bidders

- Indian firms expected to respond are Tata Advanced Systems, Mahindra Defence, Adani Defence, Larsen & Toubro, Bharat Forge and Reliance Infrastructure
- Foreign manufactures expected to respond are US majors Lockheed Martin and Bell helicopters, European Airbus Helicopters and the Russian Rosoboronexport.

<https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/nation/mod-seeks-bids-for-111-navy-utility-helicopters/728012.html>

दैनिक जागरण

72,400 असाल्ट राइफल को अमेरिकी कंपनी से करार

नई दिल्ली, प्रेटर : भारत ने अमेरिका से 72,400 असाल्ट राइफलें खरीदने के लिए अनुबंध पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं। करीब 700 करोड़ रुपये में ये राइफलें खरीदी जाएंगी। रक्षा मंत्रालय ने यह जानकारी दी। अमेरिका और कई यूरोपीय देशों की सेना इस राइफल का इस्तेमाल करती हैं। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि भारत ने फास्ट ट्रैक खरीद प्रक्रिया के तहत अमेरिका से सिग सौयर असाल्ट राइफलें खरीदने

के लिए अनुबंध पर हस्ताक्षर किए हैं। आज की तारीख से एक साल के भीतर अमेरिका की सिग सौयर कंपनी 7.62 एमएम की 72,400 राइफलें देगी। इन राइफलों के मिलने से भारतीय सेना की ताकत और बढ़ जाएगी। अधिकारियों ने बताया कि अभी भारतीय सेना के पास 5.56 गुणा 45 एमएम इंसास राइफलें हैं। इन्हें आधुनिक और उन्नत तकनीक वाली 7.62 गुणा 51 एमएम राइफल से बदलना आवश्यक हो गया था। रक्षा मंत्री निर्मला सीतारमण ने इसी महीने सिग सौयर राइफलों की खरीद की मंजूरी दी थी।

What HAS Russia spotted in Earth's upper atmosphere? Scientists say satellite detected unexplained 'explosions of light' in cloud-free skies

By Cheyenne Macdonald

- *Scientists with Lomonosov satellite say it spotted several 'explosions' of light*
- *These were spotted dozens of miles above the surface, with no clouds below*
- *Researchers say they may have come across previously unknown phenomenon*

A Russian satellite designed to monitor the atmosphere for high-energy cosmic rays has detected mysterious 'explosions' of light miles above Earth's surface, Russian scientists say.

While numerous examples of unusual space weather phenomena have been spotted in the upper atmosphere before, the team operating the Lomonosov satellite say what they've found may be something entirely new.

Despite the occurrence of several powerful bursts, Russian scientists say there were no signs of storms in the area, according to Sputnik.

The satellite, named after scientist Mikhail Lomonosov, launched in 2016 and is integrated with the Kanopus-B spacecraft.

Its goal is to study high-energy cosmic rays, including gamma rays, magnetospheric particles, and transient light phenomena in the upper atmosphere.

And, the scientists now say it's spotted something odd.

'With the help of the telescope, we have obtained even more important results than we expected,' Mikhail Panasyuk, Director of the Research Institute of Nuclear Physics at Moscow State University, told Sputnik.

'It looks like we have encountered new physical phenomena. We do not yet know their physical nature.'

'For example, during Lomonosov's flight at an altitude of several dozen kilometers, we have registered several times a very powerful "explosion" of light,' the director said.

The satellite, called Mikhailo Lomonosov, launched in 2016 and is integrated with the Kanopus-B spacecraft

'But everything was clear underneath it, no storms, no clouds.'

In recent years, unusual electrical discharges have been captured on film by satellites and even astronauts aboard the International Space Station.

There are several types of luminous flashes, most notably red sprites and blue jets.

These bursts of electricity, however, are always associated with storm clouds, making the latest discovery all the more baffling.

The Lomonosov Project is working to get to the bottom of short-lived phenomena such as that recently detected in the upper atmosphere to understand processes beyond cosmic rays and gamma bursts.

While they may occur high above Earth, the effects of space weather can trickle down and interfere with activity down at the surface.

<https://www.dailymail.co.uk/sciencetech/article-6692297/What-Russia-spotted-Earths-atmosphere-Scientists-say-satellite-saw-explosions-light.html>