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Def min finalises big pvt role in arms production

By Rajat Pandit

To Start With Jets, Copters, Subs & Tanks

A MESSAGE TO DRDO, OFB?

- Policy seems to be a message to DRDO, 5 defence PSUs, 4 shipyards and 41 factories under OFB that they have **failed to deliver the goods over decades**
- As a result, **India is still forced to import 65% of its military requirement**, and hence can be strategically choked by foreign powers at any time

The broad contours of the long-awaited “strategic partnership” policy to boost the Indian private sector's role in production of cutting-edge weapon systems, in collaboration with global armament majors through joint ventures here, was finalised by the Centre on Saturday .

The defence acquisitions council (DAC), chaired by defence minister Arun Jaitley , also gave the green signal to the Army to go ahead with its long-term plan to induct three squadrons (39 choppers) of attack helicopters for its three “strike“ corps, among other modernisation proposals, said sources.

The main takeaway was the strategic partnership policy under the “Make in India“ thrust of the Modi government, which initially opens up four major segments of fighter jets, helicopters, submarines and armoured vehicles (tanks and infantry combat vehicles) for private sectors players. TOI was the first to report that the policy would be cleared by the DAC this month as a major step towards building a robust domestic defence-industrial base.

India still imports 65% of its military requirement and can be strategically choked by foreign powers in times of conflicts.

The policy , which will now go to the cabinet committee on security for final approval after the “smaller details“ are worked out, is a clear message to the DRDO and its 50 labs, five defence PSUs, four shipyards, and the 41 factories under the ordnance factory board (OFB) that they have largely failed to deliver the goods over the decades. However, due to the stiff resistance put up by the public sector lobby against the SP policy, defence against the SP policy , defence PSUs, shipyards and OFB will also be eligible to compete with private sector companies for selection as SPs in the submarine and armoured vehicle segments.

As per the SP roadmap, which will take almost a year to unfold, officials said only one company will be selected as the SP at a time

MAJOR PROJECTS AWAITING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

HELICOPTERS

- Navy needs 147 multi-role helicopters (MRHs) with anti-submarine warfare capabilities
- Initial procurement case of 16 MRHs from Sikorsky set to be scrapped now
- Navy inducting 4/5 warships per year but has run out of new MRHs
- 110 twin-engine naval light utility helicopters also needed to replace obsolete Chetak

ARMOURED VEHICLES

- Army wants FRCVs (future ready combat vehicles or tanks) and FICVs (future infantry combat vehicles) in years ahead
- ₹ 60,000-crore FICV project, with 2 private sector players and Ordnance Factory Board, yet to be finalised
- US has proposed a trilateral project with Israel for FICVs under the defence technology & trade Initiative

FIGHTERS

- IAF wants 2nd single-engine fighter production line after indigenous Tejas fighter
- American F-16s & Swedish Gripen-E jets in contention
- IAF needs 44 fighter squadrons (each with 18 jets) but down to just 33
- 100 “improved” Tejas Mark-1A to come in 2020-2026

SUBMARINES

- Over Rs 70,000-crore ‘Project-75-India’ for six ‘stealth diesel-electric subs got initial approval in Nov 2007
- But defence/private shipyard & foreign collaborator not yet selected
- Will take 8-10 years for 1st sub to roll out after contract inked
- Navy has just 13 old conventional subs. Six Scorpene subs (₹23,652cr project at Mazagon Docks) to come in 2017-2021

in each of the four segments in “a transparent and competitive process“ for the longterm partnership.

The defence ministry will select the companies on the basis of adequate financial strength (Rs 4,000 crore in annual turnover over the last three fiscals, capital assets of Rs 2,000 crore etc), demonstrable manufacturing and technical expertise, existing infrastructure and the ability to absorb technology from their foreign partners. A company's record of “wilful default, debt restructuring and non-performing assets“ will also be taken into account by the defence ministry .

The foreign companies or original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) will be selected, in a separate but parallel process, primarily on the basis of the “range, depth and scope“ of the transfer of technology (ToT) they are willing to offer. Other criteria will include the indigenous content, eco-system development, supplier base and future R&D, among other things.

“The policy is aimed at developing the defence industrial ecosystem in the country through the involvement of major Indian corporates as well as the MSME sector. It will give a boost to the ‘Make in India’ policy and set the Indian industry on the path to acquire cutting-edge capabilities which will contribute to the building of self-reliance in the vital sector of national security requirements,“ said an official.

“The Indian industry partners would tie up with global OEMs to seek technology transfers and manufacturing know-how to set up domestic manufacturing infrastructure and supply chains,“ he added.

The SP policy was to be part of the new Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP), which came into effect in April 2016. But it could not be finalised till now, further delaying the proposed projects for a new fighter production line and the Rs 70,000 crore project to build six new-generation stealth submarines.



Sun, 21 May, 2017

Aircraft deal between India & Russia goes off the runway

An Ambitious Indo-Russian project to co-develop fifth generation fighter planes has hit major roadblocks over the issues of price and technology even as New Delhi has scrapped a programme to jointly produce multirole transport aircraft with Moscow over similar issues. India and Russia had signed an agreement around 2007 to co-develop both the transport plane and the Fifth Generation Fighter Aircraft (FGFA) as part of their attempt to pool in resources to develop latest and advanced variants of the aircraft to meet the global challenges in this domain. “We have decided to scrap the Multirole Transport Aircraft (MTA) as we don’t need the plane anymore due to issues over the technology offered for the planes and constant delays,“ government sources told MAIL TODAY. The decision of the government and the Air Force has been conveyed to the Russians some time back, they said. On the FGFA programme, the sources said the aircraft being built under the plan are going to cost much more than what the Indian Air Force had expected and the technology on offer from Russia is also not up to global standards.

The Russians were developing the aircraft known as PAK-FA on their side as a counter to the American F-22 Raptor and F-35 Lightning which are considered the latest combat planes with stealth technologies and abilities to strike farther than their older counterparts. “The cost of the FGFA programme is coming to be huge. While we have already spent close to US\$ 300 million (ˆ2,000 crore) on the preliminary design phase, the Russians are demanding US\$ 6.7 billion (ˆ44,800 crore) as the development cost of the planes which is coming to be much higher than what we had perceived,“ the sources revealed. “The Russians are asking us to make big investments in the programme. While we are planning to induct only 12 of these planes in their IAF, they are asking India to buy 127 of these aircraft,“ added the sources.

Sources said the investment of USD 6.7 billion (ˆ44,800 crore) would give India only four prototypes of the FGFA aircraft and it will have to pay another USD 135 million (ˆ900 crore) each for the 127 planes which we would be ready for induction only after the year 2027-28. The overall cost of the project for the IAF is likely to come out to USD 24 billion (ˆ1,60,000 crore) which is almost the double the amount the force had envisaged when the project was initiated, the sources said. The IAF had first started negotiating for the acquisition of

more than 210 planes and wanted an equal share in terms of technology Aircraft deal between India & Russia goes off the runway development as it was making equal investment in the project.

Sources said a committee has been formed under Air Marshal (retired) S Varthaman to see whether the FGFA planes were actually required by the IAF and how did the Russian aircraft compared with the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) proposed by the DRDO to be developed as an indigenous fifth generation combat plane. The Varthaman committee has already given presentations to defence minister Arun Jaitley on the matter as the government has to take a final call on whether the FGFA is required or not. Sources said the decision on developing the AMCA will have to be taken in near future as it will take at least 15 years for the plane to come out of the drawing board to join the IAF for operational service.



Sun, 21 May, 2017

Two soldiers killed as army foils infiltration bid in Nowgam sector

Two militants were also killed in the gunbattle, an army spokesman based in Kashmir said

SRINAGAR: Two soldiers and two militants were killed in Nowgam sector's Handwara after the army foiled an infiltration bid from across the LoC in the frontier Kupwara district, north of Kashmir, on Saturday.

An army spokesman based in Kashmir confirmed the toll during the gunbattle between the militants and the forces and said the operation was still on.

Initial reports suggested that two personnel sustained serious injuries during the clash and were removed to a hospital for treatment, where they succumbed to their injuries.

Meanwhile, a policeman allegedly decamped with four guns from a Food Cooperation of India godown in central Kashmir's Budgam district.

Sources identified the policeman as Syed Naveed Mushtaq. They said Mushtaq's two friends came to the godown and asked other security personnel to join them for prayers. While the men were praying, the trio fled with the rifles.

Earlier on Saturday morning, militants had managed to flee after security forces challenged them in Badi Behak area of Handwara. A search operation was launched in the area.



Sun, 21 May, 2017

China cripples CIA operations, kills informants, reports NYT

As many as 20 CIA sources were killed or imprisoned in China over a two-year period, the Times said

The Chinese government "systematically dismantled" CIA spying operations in China starting in late 2010 and killed or imprisoned at least a dozen CIA sources over the next two years, according to a media report. The New York Times in its report cited 10 current and former US officials, who described the intelligence breach as one of the worst in decades. They spoke on condition of anonymity.

The report said US intelligence and law enforcement agencies scrambled to stem the damage, but were bitterly divided over the cause of the breach. Some investigators were convinced there was a mole within the CIA, while others believed the Chinese had hacked the covert system the CIA used to communicate with its foreign sources. The debate remains unresolved, the paper said.

The CIA, which declined to comment to the Times, also declined to comment yesterday to The Associated Press. The number of CIA assets lost in China rivaled those lost in the Soviet Union and Russia as a result of the betrayals by both CIA officer Aldrich Ames and FBI agent Robert Hanssen, who were arrested in 1994 and 2001, respectively, the report said.

As many as 20 CIA sources were killed or imprisoned in China over a two-year period, the Times said, citing two former senior US officials. Investigators suspected a former CIA operative of being a mole, but failed to gather enough evidence to arrest him and he is now living in another Asian country, the report said.

Those who rejected the mole theory attributed the losses to sloppy American tradecraft in China. By 2013, the FBI and CIA concluded that China no longer had the ability to identify American agents, the Times said.