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IAF: Tejas not good enough for Indian skies

By Sudhi Ranjan Sen

Tejas — the indigenously made Light-Combat single engine fighter — isn't enough to protect Indian skies, the India Air Force (IAF) has told the government. The response came after the South Block asked the IAF to scrap its plans of acquiring single-engine fighters from global, top sources told India Today. The IAF said the Tejas is far behind its competitors like the JAS 39 Gripen manufactured by the Swedish aerospace company Saab and the US made F-16 manufactured by Lockheed Martin, sources said.

National Security Adviser Ajit Doval is understood to have raised the issue after the government asked the IAF to scrap its plans to acquire foreign made single engine fighters and go for the Indian made fighters only. Recently, the IAF made a presentation to the government to explain why Teja's alone can't meet India's requirements. Documents accessed by India Today reveal that the IAF has told the government that the "endurance" of Tejas in combat is just about 59 minutes as against 3 hours of Gripen and nearly 4 hours for the F-16. Also, Tejas can carry a pay-load of about three tons against nearly six tons and seven tons by the Gripen and F-16 respectively.

"In other words, for target that needs about 36 bombs to be destroyed, one will have to deploy six Tejas as against just three Gripen or F-16," the IAF has told the government. The IAF has also said Tejas needs 20 hours of serving for every hour of flying as against six hours for Gripen and 3.5 hours for F-16. The cost of maintaining the Tejas is much higher than the other fighters.

Also, both the F-16 and Gripen has a life-span of 40-years against just 20 of Tejas. And, in some areas the vintage Russian made Mig-21 is better than Tejas, the IAF is understood to have told the government. India is desperate for single-engine fighters to replace aging MiG-21s. The country needs at least 42 fighter squadrons to fight a two front war, but currently has only 33 squadrons.

And, at least another 11 fighter squadrons of the IAF will have to be retired in the next two years. So far, the IAF has ordered 123 Tejas fighters but wants a better single-engine fighter to make up for the huge-shortfall in the fighter strength. Of the 123 Tejas fighters, only 40 will be Tejas Mark-1 and the rest 83 will be an upgraded version.

Indian commandos in Israel for 2-week long Blue Flag military drills

India is participating in the Blue Flag drill for the first time. It is a biannual exercise designed to strengthen Israel's military cooperation internationally.

India is looking to boost its special forces capabilities, including cross-border counter-terrorist operations, during a two-week military drill with the air forces of Israel and eight other nations in what is the largest such exercise in Israeli history.

The 45-member Indian contingent, including 16 Garud commandos, led by Group Captain Maluk Singh, is also closely working with Israel's select special forces during the Blue Flag aerial training exercise with focus on learning what makes them excel at special operations. "We would look to learn and share with them the procedures followed in mutual interoperability, counter-terrorist operations, method of inducting and

training people and try and compare to see if a course correction is required at our end,” an Indian officer leading the Garud commandos told PTI.

“The Israelis are more battle-hardened as they have more experience in cross border operations and we can learn from their experiences,” the officer said.

In a rare move, while contingents of other participating nations in the massive “war drill” feature fighter aircraft, the Indian Air Force (IAF) decided to send C-130J Super Hercules aircraft along with Garud commandos who will be training for a week each with Israeli Air Force’s elite units - Unit 5101 (more commonly referred to as the Shaldag Commando unit) and Unit 669 (Airborne Rescue And Evacuation Unit).

The Garud commandos started training with Unit 669 earlier this week on Sunday and would be moving to the Palmachim Air Force base next week to train with the Shaldag Unit.

Unit 669 was initially mandated to extract and provide medical treatment to downed (and possibly injured) pilots beyond enemy lines. However, in later years the unit also participated in extraction of soldiers of other arms of the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), especially Sayeret (Special Forces) fighters in operations beyond enemy lines and seamen in distress.

Shaldag’s declared mission is to deploy undetected into combat and hostile environments to conduct special reconnaissance, establish assault zones or airfields, while simultaneously conducting air traffic control and commando actions. Its operators undergo the longest training phase of any unit in the IDF, lasting 22 months, and training has a heavy emphasis on navigation.

The mandated role of Garud Commando Force, whose motto - ‘Defence by Offence’ - matches closely with the task assigned to these two special units of the Israeli Air Force.

“They are very strong as far as special forces are concerned. This is one area we are definitely looking to learn from their experience”, Maluk Singh told PTI.

The Blue Flag drill is a biannual exercise designed to strengthen Israel’s military cooperation internationally. This is the first time India is participating in the drill, along with the US, France, Germany, Italy, Greece and Poland. An unidentified eighth nation is also said to be participating in the military exercise as per local media. Israel is among the top three to four arms suppliers to India with sales ranging from Phalcon AWACS (airborne warning and control systems) and Searcher, Heron and Harop UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) to Aerostat and Green Pine radars, Barak anti-missile defence and several types of missiles and laser-guided bombs. The Blue Flag exercise being held at Uvda Air Force Base in Israel’s south presents a platform for sharing of knowledge, combat experience and in improving operational capability of the participating nations, a spokesperson for the IDF said.

As part of the exercise, foreign crews will practice handling the threat of advanced surface-to-air anti-aircraft missiles, with the Israeli Air Force’s so-called Red Squadron playing the role of the enemy. The exercise will include flights in formation with planes from different countries, with no countries opposing each other. Lt Col Nadav, Commander of the 133rd Squadron (Knights of the Twin Tail), which operates ‘Falcon’ (F-15) fighter jets and is leading the exercise, described it as a “significant milestone in the relationship between the Israeli Air Force and international air forces”.

“This exercise will allow us to continue cooperating with these forces in the future as well,” he said.

Close to a 100 aircraft and more than a thousand support crew and pilots from the visiting air forces are taking part in the drill taking place in the Ovda Base north of the southern coastal resort city of Eilat, while officers and attaches from nearly 40 other countries are expected to attend the exercise which the Israeli Air Force has described as aiming to “simulate extreme combat scenarios and coalition flights as realistically as possible”. The IDF also said that Israeli squadrons of F-15, F-16I and F-16C/D jets will be used, alongside transport aircraft, helicopters and unmanned drones, during the exercise.

Greece, Poland and the US will drill using their own F-16s, France will use 2000D fighter jets, Germany will deploy Eurofighter Typhoon jets, and Italy will use multirole fighters while India will use C-130Js.

Israel also said “electronic warfare” will be used during the drills but no details were shared. According to the Israeli army, the goal of the exercise is to both improve technical ability and to strengthen the “diplomatic cooperation between the countries”.

The Blue Flag exercise was started in 2013 by Israel but its third edition has attracted huge attention given the massive participation.



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

Delhi Diplomacy - India dashes hopes of SAARC talks revival

India on Thursday dashed any hopes of reviving the Saarc process, saying the regional grouping could only function in an atmosphere free from terrorism. The government also reiterated that it would engage in security groups like the “quadrilateral” as long as it advanced Indian interests.

“India is open and willing to work with like-minded countries on issues that advance our interests and promote our interests,” secretary (east) Preeti Saran told journalists.

Responding to questions about remarks by Pakistan Punjab's environment minister that the issue of smog could be addressed by both countries under the Saarc framework, the MEA spokesperson said Saarc meetings could only happen when “one country” decided to stop providing an enabling environment to terrorism. The statement follows Pakistani reports that Sri Lanka had supported Pakistan on reviving Saarc.

On Sunday, PM Narendra Modi heads out to the Philip pines for his first official visit there and his fourth AseanIndia and East Asia summits, where he is expected to hold talks with President Rodrigo Duterte, and perhaps US President Donald Trump and China's Xi Jinping.

Saran said besides attending the summits and bilateral meetings, “The PM will attend the 50th anniversary of the establishment of Asean, and an Asean business and investment summit.” Officials of India, the US, Australia and Japan are expected to meet on the sidelines of the EAS to thrash out the details of the resurrected quadrilateral.



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

Data protection paper in a week: Rai

‘Need to define standards, protocols’

India will release a concept paper on its Data Protection Act within a week seeking stakeholders’ comments as government experts grapple with issues concerning inter-operability, security and privacy of new emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and cloud computing, said Gulshan Rai, chief of cybersecurity. “We need to define security standards and protocols,” Mr. Rai told delegates at a Internet of Things (IoT) conference here on Thursday. “Government is in the process of evolving a Data Protection Act. There is an expert committee under the chairmanship of Justice Srikrishna, of which I am also a member. The concept paper of the group will be out in a week’s time.”

To keep data of Indians “secure” and “protected” the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology, on July 31, formed a committee of experts headed by B.N. Srikrishna, a former Supreme Court judge. The experts, who include members from the government, academia and industry, will identify data protection issues and recommend methods for addressing them. It will also suggest a draft Data Protection Bill.

Technical issues - “There are technical issues such as interoperability, compatibility, privacy, security and adaptability and the cost of implementation. The other issues concern the diplomatic part of it. Also, do we have a international legal framework? How do we interpret the jurisdiction? That is another challenge,” Mr. Rai said.

There are nine billion IoT devices worldwide and by 2020 “we expect almost an increase by factor of three.” Today, the entire turnover of IoT devices is about \$150 billion and “we expect it to go up by a factor of four in the next four years,” he said, quoting a report.

The committee’s view was that before the technology was implemented in the smart cities one needs to have a security architecture and framework in place, Mr. Rai said.

“Who will tellus, we did not have any experience. We had some expertise of what the security systems are in the conventional systems. We did not have the experience on smart cities and other technologies. There will be a different sort of technological implementation issues in smart cities and IoT technologies. Those can be in terms of protocols, application programme interface and upgradation software,” he said.

“A whole new world, not only for the development of technology, but for security will also emerge. The investment on device is much lesser as compared to the investment planned on security in both architecture or security application,” Mr. Rai said. A UN Group of Governmental Experts, tasked with examining cyberthreats and making recommendations, was unable to reach a consensus on its final report in June. While previous UN GGE reports remain valid and applicable, though not legally binding, the group’s future is uncertain, according to a statement on the UN website.

Nations may move towards bilateral agreements, a trend which was prevalent in 2015 and 2016, according to the UN.

“When we went to the meeting there were lot of opposition on the attributions,” Mr. Rai said. Ultimately how do you attribute where the crime incident happened? Who is the actor? How do we define attribution? Do we have the inherent right to defend if attack happens? The talks failed.”

“Relationship with industry is important on realising what is the techno-cyber or techno-legal procedure is,” he said. “Today we need a collaboration with the industry because the entire cyber governance involves multiple stakeholders. We need help of stakeholders to build security architecture and cybergovernance architecture. We are looking at whether to be compatible to the European GDPR or the U.S. standard.”

Mr. Rai told the industry to build capacities for training graduates on new technologies by initiating short-term courses which needed to be upgraded from time to time.

“Discussions are on with IIT Delhi and Hyderabad. Practical part will have to come from the industry. We want to set up 10 centres in the next eight to nine months.”



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

Now, Central Govt Staff Can Buy, Build House worth Rs 1cr

By Rajesh Kumar

Central Government employees can now purchase or construct a house worth Rs 1 crore and borrow up to Rs 25 lakh as House Building Advance (HBA), as per the new HBA rules notified on Thursday. The earlier cost ceiling limit for purchasing/constructing a flat was Rs 30 lakh while the borrowing limit was capped at Rs 7.50 lakh. The new rule for cost ceiling also provides for upward revision of 25 per cent in deserving cases. The new rules will benefit about 50 lakh Central Government employees in the country.

In case both husband and wife are Central Government employees, they would be eligible to take HBA either jointly or separately. Earlier, only one spouse was eligible for House Building Advance. The HBA is admissible to an employee only once in a lifetime.

"The demand for housing sector will rapidly increase in the middle-income segment. The EMIs will be comparatively less than what taking a loan from a private bank would accrue. Overall, there would be a huge saving for Central Government employees," said a senior official of Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.

A Central Government employee said that new HBA rules will help in availing loan at a cheaper rate from the bank. Besides, they can also avail loan from the bank on the basis of registry of the document.

As per new rules, the rate of interest on HBA should be 8.50 percent while earlier the interest rate was 9.50 percent. This rate of interest should be reviewed every three years. "All cases of subsequent tranches/instalments of HBA being taken by the employee in different financial years should be governed by the applicable rate of interest in the year in which the HBA was sanctioned, in the event of a change in the rate of interest.

As far as expansion of existing house is concerned, the amount of HBA will be limited to 34 months basic pay subject to a maximum of Rs 10 lakhs only.

The amount of the advance shall be restricted to 80 per cent of the true cost of the land and construction of house or cost of the expansion of living accommodation in the case of construction in rural areas.



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

US, China can solve all global problems: Trump to Xi

The two leaders hold talks in Beijing's Great Hall of the People

US President Donald Trump today sought China's cooperation in solving North Korea's nuclear crisis as well as other global problems of "great danger" as he held talks with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping to boost bilateral ties. The two leaders met in Beijing's Great Hall of the People for talks following the US president's glitzy royal welcome in the Chinese capital.

"I just want to thank you for the warm welcome and I look forward to many years of success and friendship, working together to solve not only our problems, but world problems and problems of great danger and security," Trump said. "I believe we can solve almost all of them and probably all of them," he said. Trump is in China as part of a five-nation tour of Asia. He has already visited South Korea and Japan, and will go on to Vietnam and the Philippines later in the week.

Discussion on how to deal with North Korea's threats to the region has dominated Trump's agenda. Earlier, Trump was given a lavish welcome with a guard of honour and 21-gun salute when he arrived at the Great Hall of the People before his talks with Xi, which were confined to delegations.

Thanking Xi for yesterday's welcome at the 15th century Forbidden City, he said the dinner which planned for 20 minutes went on for two hours. "We enjoyed every minute of it with your beautiful wife and Melania together. Their relationship is a great one and our relationship has already proven to be a great one," he said. "Our meeting this morning in front of my representatives and your representatives was excellent, discussing North Korea. And I do believe there's a solution to that as you do," he said.

"We must act fast. And hopefully China will act faster and more effectively on this problem than anyone," Trump said. Referring to over USD 370 billion imbalance in bilateral trade in favour of China, Trump blamed the previous US administrations for it. "But we'll make it fair and it'll be tremendous to both of us," he said. On his friendship with Xi, he said "my feeling toward you is an incredibly warm one.

As we said there's great chemistry and I think we're going to do tremendous things both for China and the United States. And it is a very, very great honour to be with you," he said.



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

3 US aircraft carriers to carry out rare joint drill

Three US aircraft carriers will stage joint drills in the western Pacific for the first time in a decade, the US Navy announced Thursday. The USS Ronald Reagan, USS Nimitz and USS Theodore Roosevelt will conduct “coordinated operations in international waters” as tensions in the region over North Korea reach fever pitch. The operation starting Saturday shows Washington’s “ironclad commitment to the continued security and stability of the region”, said Scott Swift, commander of the US Pacific Fleet in a statement.

On Wednesday, Trump warned North Korea not to “try” the US but appeared to moderate his bellicose tone, offering Kim Jong-Un a “path to a better future”. The president met Chinese leader Xi Jinping on Thursday for talks dominated by the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear and missile programme. Beijing and Washington have also been at odds over Chinese naval operations in the South China Sea.

The US warships will carry out air defence drills, sea surveillance, defensive air combat training and other training operations, the Navy said. “It is a rare opportunity to train with two aircraft carriers together, and even rarer to be able to train with three,” said Swift. It is the first time three aircraft carriers have staged drills in the region since 2007, he added. The operation will run between November 11 and 14.

On Wednesday Trump said in South Korea that the “sinister regime” to the North has become a dangerous menace, and warned Jong-un not to test his patience. “I hope I speak not only for our countries, but for all civilised nations, when I say to the North: Do not underestimate us. And do not try us.”



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

Syria, Russia Slammed At Weapons Watchdog Meet

Syria and its close ally Russia faced harsh criticism on Thursday at a meeting of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons following an investigation that blamed Syrian President Bashar Assad’s regime for a sarin attack that killed about 100 people in April.

At a closed-doors meeting of the chemical weapons watchdog’s executive council, US representative Kenneth D Ward said that Russia “continues to deny the truth and, instead, collaborates with the Assad regime in a deplorable attempt to discredit” the joint UN-OPCW investigation.

The text of Ward’s statement was posted on the OPCW website. Russia has denounced the results of the investigation into the Khan Sheikhoun attack and vetoed a UN Security Council resolution to renew the mandate of the Joint Investigative Mechanism, known as the JIM, which expires this month.

The OPCW has a team called Fact Finding Mission, which investigates whether chemical weapons have been used in Syria. The JIM was set up by the Security Council to apportion blame for such attacks.

Britain’s representative to the OPCW, Peter Wilson, said the UN Security Council should renew the JIM’s mandate. “No ifs, no buts and no skimping on the mandate. It must be able to do its job,” Wilson said.

Ward, meanwhile, said the meeting in The Hague also had to send a strong message condemning the use of chemical weapons.

“Let me be clear — inaction by this council is unacceptable, as it would severely damage the credibility and effectiveness of this organisation and the Chemical Weapons Convention, and undermine the broader framework of arms control and non-proliferation,” he said.

Statements issued by the OPCW’s Executive Council are normally adopted by consensus, but that appears unlikely, given Russia’s criticism of the investigation and its findings.



Fri, 10 Nov, 2017

China’s out-of-control space station will crash on Earth

China’s first space station, Tiangong-1, has been out of control since September 2016, and now experts have predicted when and where it will come crashing back down to Earth. The European Space Agency (ESA) predicts that the 8.5-tonne spacecraft will make an 'uncontrolled re-entry' to our planet between January and March 2018. While a precise landing location remains unclear, ESA has provided the latitudes between which Tiangong-1 is likely to land – and countries at risk include Spain, Italy, Turkey, India and parts of the US.

ESA has announced that it is hosting an international campaign to monitor the re-entry of Tiangong-1 early next year. The Tiangong-1 spacecraft launched in 2011, with the aim of using the craft to set up a larger space station. But in September 2016, Chinese officials confirmed that they had lost control of the spacecraft. The craft is now at about 300 kilometres (186 miles) altitude in an orbit that is expected to decay sometime between January and March 2018, when it will make an uncontrolled re-entry. Holger Krag, head of ESA’s Space Debris Office, said: “Owing to the geometry of the station’s orbit, we can already exclude the possibility that any fragments will fall over any spot further north than 43°N or further south than 43°S.”

“This means that re-entry may take place over any spot on Earth between these latitudes, which includes several European countries, for example.”

“The date, time and geographic footprint of the re-entry can only be predicted with large uncertainties.” “Even shortly before re-entry, only a very large time and geographical window can be estimated.” Much of the spacecraft is expected to burn up in the atmosphere upon re-entry. But owing to the station’s mass and construction materials, there is a possibility that some portions of it will survive and reach the surface. In the

TIANGONG-1

- **Tiangong-1 is China's first Space Station Module.**
- **The vehicle was the nation's first step towards its ultimate goal of developing, and operating a Space Station as a permanent human presence in Low Earth Orbit.**
- **The module was launched on September 29, 2012.**
- **Tiangong-1 features flight-proven components of Chinese Shenzhou Spacecraft as well as new technology.**
- **It consists of three sections: the aft service module, a transition section and habitable orbital module.**

history of spaceflight, no casualties due to falling space debris have ever been confirmed.

ESA plans to conduct an international expert workshop on 28 February to focus on re-entry predictions, in the hopes of anticipating Tiangong's return to Earth. Tiangong-1 is China's first Space Station Module. The vehicle was the nation's first step towards its ultimate goal of developing, building, and operating a large Space Station as a permanent human presence in Low Earth Orbit.

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