

*Thu, 15 Mar, 2018*

DRDO Asks For LCA Mk2 Funding, IAF 'Committed' To 201 LCA Mk2 Fighters

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has asked the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence for additional funds to develop the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Mk2.

In submissions made to the committee, Secretary, Defence Research and Development and Chairman, DRDO, S. Christopher mentioned a request of INR 800 crore for work on the LCA Mk2, also, saying the Indian Air Force (IAF) had committed itself to 201 LCA Mk2, in addition to the 123 LCA Mk1/1A or order or being contemplated at the moment. The naval LCA was also intended to be based on the LCA Mk2.

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defence cited his remarks in a report released on Tuesday, in which he was quoted as saying, "We have LCA Programme which is coming under grants-in-aid which requires funding. As of now, we have got the orders for about 123 aircraft and also Air Force is committed to take another 201 aircraft which means, Mark-II to be designed and developed, we are in the half way through. There are some expenditures involved. We request another Rs.800 Crore under grants-in-aid. If it could be provided we will be happy."

Christopher had made a reference to an IAF commitment for 201 LCA Mk2 earlier this month, as well. The Indian Express quoted him as saying in Ahmedabad, "In addition to that (123 LCA Mk1/1A order), the air force has given in writing another 201 aircraft, which is the next version, that we call as Mark-II. We are working on it and by 2022 it will be flying."

These remarks come during a period of confusion about the intention of the defence ministry and IAF with respect to acquisition of fighter aircraft. After the withdrawal of the IAF tender for 126 Medium Multi Role Combat Aircraft (MMRCA) in 2015 and the order for 36 Rafale fighter aircraft, the defence ministry under Manohar Parrikar announced its intention to hold a competition for a Make in India single-engine fighter aircraft.

Fighters were also listed as one of four domestic manufacturing priorities in Chapter 07 of the Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) on strategic partnerships, released last year.

More recently, reports have emerged suggesting that the defence ministry under Nirmala Sitharaman might be open to throwing the competition open to all manufacturers and fighters, to include twin-engine aircraft, as well.

At the same time, while there is talk of IAF interest in the U.S. fifth generation F-35, the French have also urged India towards a repeat government-to-government order for Rafale fighters.

The IAF's current order numbers for the LCA:

- LCA Mk1 (IOC standard): 20
- LCA Mk1 (FOC standard): 20
- LCA Mk1A: 83

IOC refers to Initial Operational Clearance; the existing standard of the aircraft, which includes a number of waivers of Staff Qualitative Requirements (SQRs). FOC refers to Final Operational Clearance, which is the next objective for the aircraft; to demonstrate an enhanced capability to meet additional SQRs, including air-to-air refueling, and integration with the Derby and Python missiles. The LCA Mk1A includes four specific capability improvements prescribed by the IAF. These include:

- Digital RWR and External SPJ Pod

- Active Electronically Scanned Array (AESA) Radar
- Combined Interrogator and Transponder (CIT)
- ASRAM – Close Combat Missile\
- Beyond Visual Range (BVR) Missile

Although the defence ministry has approved the acquisition of 83 LCA Mk1A, no order has been placed yet.

The LCA Mk2 requires a more powerful engine than the the current GE F404 powering the LCA Mk1. The GE F414 had been selected for the LCA Mk2. However, there is now speculation a revived indigenous Kaveri engine could power the aircraft with French assistance. This is not the first time such an idea has been considered.

Either way, any engine upgrade would likely require significant changes to the existing airframe. In recent years, both the IAF and the navy had dropped the idea of pursuing an LCA Mk2 model from active consideration.

On its part, the committee recommended the extra cash for the LCA Mk2, but said, “The Committee, while examining the Demands for Grants, discovered that delays in completion of projects is a part and parcel of DRDOs functioning. For instance, Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) was supposed to be completed in 2008 but the revised date of completion is June, 2019. In the case of Aero engine, Kaveri, the original date of completion was 1996 but was revised to December, 2009. Further revision of the completion schedule continues to be under process. Similar is the case with LCA-Navy, Airborne Early Warning and Control (AEW&C) System, Air to Air Missile system-Astra, Long Range Surface to Air Missile etc. to name a few.”

<https://defenceaviationpost.com/drdo-asks-lca-mk2-funding-iaf-committed-201-lca-mk2-fighters/>



Thu, 15 Mar, 2018

IAF to buy 324 Tejas fighter jets to increase squadron: Report

Indian Air Force has promised to have a total of 18 Tejas fighter jet squadrons if DRDO, Aeronautical Development Agency and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited deliver required Mark II fighter jets on time.

By: Ananth Shreyas

The Indian Air Force (IAF) which lacks the required number of fighter jets in its squadrons, has now said that it will induct 324 indigenously built Tejas fighter jets. The IAF has 31 fighter squadrons and lacks the capabilities to combat immediate threats from Pakistan and China. The minimum required amount of fighter squadrons that IAF needs is 42. The IAF has now ”firmly committed” to 123 Tejas fighter jets, a ToI report suggests.

The developmental and production costs are estimated to be Rs. 75,000 crore. However, the IAF said that the rest 201 jets must be “entirely new fighters”. It demanded that the fighter jets have better avionics, radar systems, enhanced fuel, weapon load capacity and better performing engines, the report further added.

The IAF which was not completely satisfied with the capabilities of Tejas fighter jets and had earlier diversified its procurement needs. The deal with France for 36 fighter Rafale jets and with a likely global tender to acquired more fighter jets, IAF is surely looking at expansion of its squadron. However, the report also suggests that IAF has agreed to have a total of 18 Tejas squadrons if DRDO (Defence Research and

Development Organisation), Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) and Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) deliver required Mark II fighter jets in time.

The indigenously built Tejas is a single engine fighter jet. It has a limited endurance of only one hour and has a weapon-carrying capacity of only 3 tonnes. Other foreign fighter jets like Saab's Gripen E and Lockheed's F-16 have superior quality and capabilities in terms of weapon carrying capacity, endurance and as well as the radius of action.

Just recently, Defence Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had said that she would not be "ditching" the Tejas project, as it is entirely home-grown. At present, HAL has been producing around 6 fighter jets in a year. Speaking recently at an event in New Delhi, the Defence Minister had stressed on the need to fuel the Make in India initiative in the defence sector and assured efficient and quick work towards making the delivery of the fighter jets.

<http://www.financialexpress.com/defence/iaf-to-buy-324-tejas-fighter-jets-to-increase-squadron-report/1099849/>



Thu, 15 Mar, 2018

India to fulfil Most of Its Fighter Jet Shortfall with Home-Grown Tejas

This is being considered a major setback by global manufacturers like Lockheed Martin and Saab, which have been aggressively trying to market their aircraft F-16 and Gripen-E, respectively, to India for the last two years.

New Delhi (Sputnik) — The Indian Air Force (IAF) has committed to buying a total of 324 locally developed fighter aircraft, including 201 upgraded versions of the Tejas. India's state-owned Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) has asked the government to sanction an additional fund of \$123 million for the upgraded versions of the Tejas fight jets, which have been upgraded with modern avionics.

"As of now, we have got the orders for about 123 aircraft and also the Air Force is committed to take another 201 aircraft," Dr. S. Christopher, the DRDO chairman said before a parliamentary panel.

The Indian defense ministry has also informed the parliamentary panel on behalf of the armed forces that the indigenously developed aircraft is compatible with present and future conflict requirements of India's armed forces.

"Tejas would form an important component of a viable air-defense system efficiently and cost-effectively. With Final Operational Clearance (FOC) features of Air to Air refueling, Derby and Python missile integrated, the LCA is expected to be a true air superiority air defense weapon of war. Light, agile and maneuverable," the Indian defense ministry acknowledged before the parliamentary panel.

Earlier on March 3, Defense Minister Nirmala Sitharaman had made it clear that her ministry will provide a decisive push to the homegrown Tejas for the Indian Air Force.

"There is a sense of urgency (to ramp up Tejas' production), more so because we have to sell it to countries," Sitharaman had said on March 3.

Presently, IAF is struggling to find financial resources to meet the requirements of aircraft, air defense systems and other critical assets due to a persistent shortfall in the budget by India's Ministry of Finance. For the year 2018-19, an estimated \$17.61 billion is required by the IAF for making urgent purchases, while the allocation is only \$10.1 billion.

"The shortfall in the budget will lead to the inability to procure spares and fuel. It will also impact maintenance and training of fleet and serviceability. Besides this pace of modernization will be a challenge," an IAF official informed the parliamentary panel.

<https://sputniknews.com/military/201803151062570720-india-rely-indigenous-fighter-jets/>