

Thailand in talks with India to buy BrahMos cruise missiles

The two navies are working closely in the areas of disaster risk management, maritime security safety, information sharing and interoperability

By Dinakar Peri

New Delhi: In possibly the first sale of BrahMos supersonic cruise missiles to another country, Thailand is in talks with India for their purchase, official sources said. A few other countries have also expressed interest in BrahMos but nothing has fructified yet.

“Negotiations are on. It may not happen this year, but most likely next year,” diplomatic sources said. While Thailand expressed interest in the missiles some time back, discussions picked pace after the visit of Royal Thai Navy Chief Admiral Ruddit to India in December last year.

As part of the expanding defence cooperation between the two countries, Thailand has made a request for repair and refurbishing their Dornier maritime patrol aircraft. “A joint team of Indian Navy, Bharat Electronics Limited and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited visited Thailand in mid-June to discuss the issue,” a defence source said.

In addition, Thailand Navy is looking to increase its capabilities and planning to induct more ships, defence sources said. In line with that, Indian Navy is exploring opportunities wherein India could help in ship design and has even “offered ship construction at the various defence public sector undertaking shipyards.” “The Indian Navy’s foreign cooperation initiatives include highlighting the capability of various Defence Public Sector Undertakings and Indian defence industry to friendly foreign navies,” the defence source stated.

Discussions are on to integrate Thailand into India’s coastal surveillance radar chain network which sources is “likely to be finalised by year end.” Several littoral states including Maldives and Seychelles have already been integrated into it.

Trilateral exercise

The inaugural India, Thailand and Singapore trilateral naval exercise announced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi during his address at Shangri-La dialogue in June 2018 is scheduled to be held later this year. Finalising the exercise got delayed and it got a push during the visit of Navy Chief Admiral Sunil Lanba to Thailand in April.

“India will host the first edition of the exercise in September this year,” diplomatic sources said adding Singapore will host the second edition and Thailand the third. The Initial Planning Conference to discuss the modalities of the exercise was held in May and the Final Planning Conference to finalise the details is scheduled to be held in August, officials said. Malaysia has also evinced interest in joining the exercise.

The two navies already conduct a Coordinated Patrol (CORPAT) and a new bilateral exercise is also in the works apart from the trilateral. As members of the Indian Ocean rim association (IORA) and Indian Ocean Naval symposium (IONS), navies of India and Thailand are working closely in the areas of disaster risk management, maritime security safety, information sharing and interoperability.

<https://www.thehindu.com/news/national/thailand-in-talks-with-india-to-buy-brahmos-cruise-missiles/article28775607.ece>



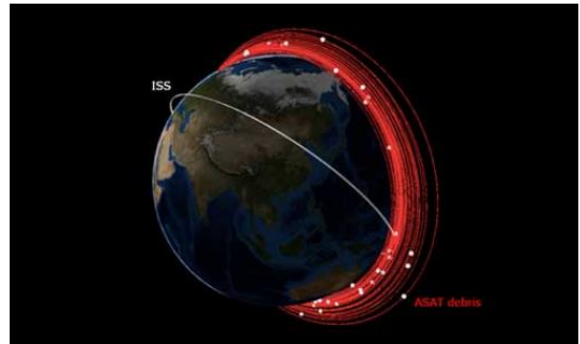
Four months after ASAT test, 40 percent of debris still in orbit

Four months after India successfully tested its anti-satellite (ASAT) capabilities, experts tracking the debris created by the event have reported that 40% of it has still not decayed. India had claimed after the test that the debris would decay within 45 days after the event.

After NASA administrator Jim Bridenstine claimed that debris from the ASAT test threatened the International Space Station (ISS), India denied the claim. Chairman of Defence Research Development Organisation (DRDO) Satheesh Reddy said the mission, codename Shakti conducted on March 27, was carefully planned to minimise the amount of debris generated, adding that it would decay within 45 days.

However, experts tracking the debris have found that not to be the case. In mid-June, as The Wire reported, one of those experts Marco Langbroek, claimed that “92 larger debris pieces from the test” had been catalogued and that half of them “were still orbiting”.

Now, another expert, Jonathan McDowell, has found that 122 days after the test, 39 of 101 catalogued objects are still in orbit. This means that around 40% of the debris is still in orbit.



On Twitter, he posted a chart tracking the orbit decay plot of the debris generated.

In another tweet, McDowell said that the highest object is expected to stay in orbit “till next spring”.

The ASAT test was conducted at an altitude of about 300 km, where it would not endanger any other satellite, the explosion pushed fragments into the upper reaches of the low-Earth orbit. This led NASA to warn that the ISS could be threatened by the debris, apart from other experts also raising concerns.

In May, Longbroek wrote in a blog post that the mission was “conducted in a less responsible way than originally claimed.” Some of the debris generated by test had much longer orbital lifetimes – in some cases up to 10-times longer, he wrote.

These fragments ended up at much higher altitudes than what the Indian government has been willing to admit, thus becoming a potential threat to satellites in all orbital inclinations at these altitudes.

The missile that was tested is a three-stage rocket and has a range of up to 1,000 km. This allows it to target most low-Earth orbit satellites. As The Wire has reported, Reddy stated that the test was conducted to intercept a satellite at about 280 km to minimise the threat of space debris. The missile has the ability to target satellites travelling at over 7.5 km/s (with relative velocities around 10 km/s for satellites in low-Earth orbit).

Reddy also said the entire operation, from identifying the satellite, launching the missile to tracking and destroying it, was automated because of the high precision and control demand.

<http://www.defencenews.in/article/Four-Months-After-ASAT-Test,-40-percent-of-Debris-Still-in-Orbit-586195>