

The Pioneer, 8 July 2006

Centre to add air power to combat Maoists (Pramod Kumar Singh)

News Delhi: The Centre has decided to add air power to combat the Maoist menace. Besides, the Air Wing of Border Security Force (BSF), Heli Corporation, a Hyderabad aviation company managed by retired pilots will add teeth to security forces' assault on Maoist modules. The Centre has assured State Governments, such as Andhra Pradesh, to foot the bills of air operations under Security Related Expenditure (SRE) scheme. Home Secretary VK Duggal on Friday reiterated the resolve to leave no stone unturned in arresting this menace. The BSF has recently acquired two MI-17 helicopters that will be pressed into service for evacuation, transportation and supply of combat materials and replenishments for the forces. Barring Chhattisgarh, the overall situation in the country was under control as far as Naxals were concerned.

The Hindu, 9 July 2006

AWACS prototype by 2007

Bangalore: The Airborne Warning and Control System (AWACS), being indigenously developed by the Centre for Air Borne Systems (CABS) here, will fly by 2010, and its prototype is expected next year, according to CABS Director K. Tamilmani. In a talk on "Aerospace Technology and National Security" at the 29th Annual Science Festival, organised by the Bangalore Science Forum here on Friday, Dr. Tamilmani said developing AWACS was the most challenging task taken up by the DRDO and the Arakkonam setback had been left behind. He said procuring such an advanced defence system was both cumbersome and very expensive as a United States-made AWACS mounted on a Boeing would cost Rs. 1,600 crore. The DRDO had been entrusted with developing the systems. Dr. Tamilmani said the future wars would be fought from space with extensive use of space technology where the AWACS would play a major role. The war room strategies would be worked out using AWACS and satellites, which would beam vital information from space to the earth stations. The defence systems — air, land and sea — would be mainly depending on AWACS.

The Hindu, 12 July 2006

India plans to buy 80 Mi-17 copters (Vladimir Radyuhin)

MOSCOW: India plans to buy a large batch of Russian military transport helicopters, Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi was quoted as telling a Russian magazine. "We are planning to order 80 Mi-17 helicopters," the Air Chief said in an interview to the Eksport Vooruzheniy (Export of Armaments). Russian industry sources told the Kommersant daily that the deal, estimated between \$400 million and \$500 million, may be signed by the yearend, and the first helicopters would be shipped in 2007. India has purchased about 400 Russian helicopters, mainly of the Mi-17 and Mi-8 series.

The Times of India, 16 July 2006

IAF may not get to fly LCA before 2010 (Rajat Pandit)

New Delhi: The much-touted Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) or "Tejas" is now giving the Arjun main-battle tank a run for its money in terms of delays in becoming combat-ready. Just like Arjun is yet to be inducted into the Army despite its development being sanctioned over 30 years ago, latest estimates hold it will take another six-seven years - if not more - for the fully-operational LCA to be inducted into IAF's combat fleet. Though the LCA project was sanctioned way back in 1983 to replace the country's ageing MiG fighters, its deadline for induction has been revised once again. Sources say LCA's "initial operational clearance" has now been pushed back to mid-2008, with the "final operational clearance" planned only by 2010. Moreover, the overall cost of the LCA project, being run by Defence Research and Development Organisation and the Aeronautical Development Agency, could well eventually touch Rs 10,000 crore. The original project cost, incidentally, was estimated to be only Rs 560 crore. The government so far has sanctioned Rs 5,489.78 crore for the development of two LCA technology demonstrators (TDs), five prototype vehicles (PVs) and eight pre-production aircraft.

The Indian Express, 20 July 2006

IAF to Centre: We want those fighter planes, now (Shiv Aroor)

New Delhi, July 19: Deeply aware of a rapidly depleting fleet that will pull down the IAF's strength to a shocking 28 fighter squadrons by 2012, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi for the first time spoke out today on the critical threats to the country's fighter strength. I am a protector, not destroyer, says man who destroyed GSLV IAF drafts low-intensity conflict profile to tackle insurgency Pokhran-II resulted in mindset of dependency, says former Navy Chief Agni-III test-fired off Orissa coast Pranab tells defence PSUs to reap offset policy benefits. In an exclusive interview to The Indian Express, Tyagi said that since it would take 15 years for the 126 new fighters under

consideration to be fully inducted and operational, Air Headquarters has told the government that it needs an immediate stopgap acquisition of fighters to tide over the crisis. "The 126 new fighters will take 15 years. We cannot afford to wait that long. Numbers are falling. We absolutely have to increase the number of aircraft. Our only option is to get something in a hurry. We are looking to order more aircraft of the types we already operate and have told the government," Tyagi said. The IAF has a sanctioned squadron strength of 39.5 squadrons but currently operates just 32. If that number hits the 28 figure, it would be the force's lowest ever below sanctioned strength.

The Indian Express, 21 July 2006

IAF to establish its own 'Space Sub-Branch' (Shiv Aroor)

New Delhi, July 20: Spurned for now by the government on its demand for a dedicated Aerospace Command, the IAF has decided, in a significant move, to establish its own "Space Sub-Branch" at Air Headquarters with a core stream of officers trained and specialised in military space activity, who will be mandated with making the service space-ready. Air Headquarters is currently being restructured to accommodate the new sub-branch. IAF to Centre: We want those fighter planes, now I am a protector, not destroyer, says man who destroyed GSLV IAF drafts low-intensity conflict profile to tackle insurgency Pokhran-II resulted in mindset of dependency, says former Navy Chief Agni-III test-fired off Orissa coast. When operational, it will be the nodal agency overseeing all IAF military-space operations, and will be headed by an Air Vice-Marshal-rank officer. In an exclusive interview to The Indian Express, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal SP Tyagi said, "It will coordinate all space related activities, which span from integrating present space capabilities into the realm of the IAF's potential, to working out requirements for acquiring future space-based capabilities."

The Pioneer, 22 July 2006

IAF refutes NSA on LeT penetration

A report by the Times Now Channel has said that National Security Advisor MK Narayanan last year wrote to all State Chief Ministers hinting at the possible infiltration of the Indian Air Force (IAF) by Lashkar-e-Tayyeba cadre. The NSA's letter dated November 30 is based on a 40-page report from the National Security Council (NSC) Secretariat. The advisory asked the armed forces intelligence set up to look into this input. The report was also sent to all the States, along with a letter from the National Security Advisor. According to the letter, "Reports of two Lashkar-e-Tayyeba cadres having joined the Indian Air Force need to be taken seriously. The counter-intelligence wings of the armed forces should look into this report." The letter further adds: "The activities of jihadi groups within India are clearly on the increase and have now assumed alarming proportions in terms of capability potential and strategy... jihadis are now operating more aggressively under ISI direction to de-stabilise India, with the previously Kashmir-centric approach having widened to acquire an all-India dimension. This has been made possible by increased networking with groups within India leading to an accretion of forces and multiplication of capabilities of core terrorist groups like Lashkar-e-Tayyeba. The "paper" further adds that its purpose is to "underline the need for greater vigilance and awareness of the activities of these groups and those linked to them" and urges State intelligence and security agencies to be "sensitised to the growing dimensions of this menace". The NSC report coming in the backdrop of the Mumbai blasts has created a flutter and led to fears that jihadi infiltration into the armed forces will only add to the reports that terrorist groups are successfully spreading their tentacles through the nation's core.

The Hindu, 24 July 2006

No LeT mole in IAF, says Pranab

Pune: The intelligence agencies and the Indian Air Force (IAF) have carried out a check into the reported infiltration of two Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) activists into the IAF and found no truth in the charges, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Sunday. "This (existence of two LeT cadres) was an annexure of a report submitted a year ago. On checking up with the intelligence agencies and the IAF, it has been found that there was no truth in this assumption," he said on the sidelines of the 17th convocation of the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapeeth here.