

The Indian Express, 3 November 2005

Vienna to Kalaikunda: Left to picket IAF base over US exercise (Subrata Nagchoudhary)

Kolkata, November 2: For the first time in decades, an Indian Air Force base will be picketed by a political party's activists. Bengal's ruling Left Front, key allies of the UPA at the Centre, will use 100,000 cadres to gherao the Kalaikunda airbase to protest American military presence when US Air Force F-16s arrive there on November 7 for Cope India 05. The joint Indo-US air exercise, until November 19, will be the first mock-tumble between the IAF and US Air Force F-16 Falcons from the USAF 35th Wing based in Misawa, North Japan. The IAF flew with Singapore F-16s earlier this year and with USAF F-15s in Gwalior last year. While the IAF will field MiG-27s, Sukhoi-30Ks, MiG-21 Bisons and Mirage-2000Hs, the US will be bringing a mixed squadron of new generation F-16CJ Falcons and F-16DJ Fighting Falcons. But the Left, particularly the CPM, has viewed such military cooperation as 'unwelcome'. In July, CPM leader Prakash Karat had demanded that the Indo-US defence cooperation pact be scrapped.

The Hindu, 5 November 2005

IAF to go ahead with joint exercises (Sandeep Dikshit)

New Delhi: Armed with an assurance from West Bengal Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the Centre on Friday decided to go ahead with the Indo-U.S. exercises at the Kalaikunda airbase from November 7. "The exercises will go ahead as scheduled. We spoke to the Chief Minister today [Friday]. ... They [workers of Left parties] would demonstrate but it will be peaceful," Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said here. Mr. Mukherjee said an unscheduled meeting of the Cabinet Committee on Security (CCS) on Thursday night considered the implications of the Left Front's plan to hold a rally near the airbase as part of its statewide protests against holding war games with the U.S.

The Telegraph, 7 November 2005

Sukhoi to star in US war games

New Delhi, Nov. 6: The Indian Air Force will deploy its top-end fighter aircraft, the Sukhoi 30 Mki, for the first time in the Cope India 2005 exercise with the US Air Force. The exercise, to be based out of Kalaikunda in Bengal, which the Left is protesting against, takes off tomorrow. The IAF has normally been wary of fielding the Sukhoi 30 Mki for drills with foreign air forces. The Sukhoi 30 Mki is the IAF's latest custom-made acquisition from Russia and air headquarters has been keen to ensure confidentiality of its radar signatures, avionics and equipment of the multi-role combat aircraft. The Sukhoi 30 Mki will be among the IAF's other fighter aircraft to be used for the exercise.

The Hindu, 7 November 2005

Security stepped up for joint air exercises

Kolkata: Elaborate security arrangements have been made around the Indian Air Force's Kalaikunda base in West Bengal in view of the threat of widespread demonstrations by ruling Left Front supporters against the Indo-U.S. joint exercises, scheduled to be held from November 7-19. At a meeting here on Sunday, the Left Front decided to organise a mass convention on November 13 in protest against the military exercises. It is for the first time that such an event is being held in the State.

The Pioneer, 8 November 2005

IAF integrating systems for greater efficiency

The IAF is working towards reducing the time between detecting an intruding aircraft and shooting it down by inducting air borne early warning systems (AWACS) and integrating the radar and weapon systems through network centric operations, chief of Western Command Air Marshal AK Singh said here on Monday. He said the IAF was making all efforts to upgrade its radar systems, linking the unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) and the weapon systems including fighter jets and ground-based air defence systems to cut down the critical time between sighting a target and bring it down either in air or on ground. The induction of the Israel-made Phalcon AWACS in the next few years coupled with more stress on network centric operations and information technology would help the IAF to have an offensive defence system, the Western Command chief said.

The Telegraph, 10 November 2005

Singapore seeks airbase on hire (Sujan Dutta)

New Delhi, Nov. 9: The Kalaikunda air force station is for hire. Singapore's air force has asked for use of its facilities and is negotiating a price with the Indian government. The airbase is currently hosting contingents of the Indian and US air forces for the latest edition of the Cope India series of exercises. Outside its perimeter, Left supporters are protesting against India's alleged military tie-up with the US. Air Force Station Kalaikunda was built by the British for the Royal Indian Air Force in the Second World War. Through this year its facilities have been

modernized and it is now upgraded to international standards and has the wherewithal to host crews from foreign air forces. The Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF) used the Kalaikunda airbase for an exercise with the IAF last October. That exercise, called Sindex '04, was based out of Gwalior, the IAF's bigger and probably more sophisticated airbase capable of hosting foreign crews. It was in Sindex '04 that the IAF exercised with F-16 Fighting Falcons for the first time in the country.

The Asian Age, 15 November 2005

IAF Units to be honoured by Kalam

Bangalore: City-based Aircraft and Systems Testing Establishment and the Institute of Aerospace Medicine will be awarded with the presidential standard and colours respectively. The awards will be presented by President A.P.J. Abdul Kalam here on November 21. According to an IAF statement, the standard and colours are contemporary symbols of the erstwhile colours, which were forerunners to the flags of the forces and served as a source of inspiration.

The Telegraph, 17 November 2005

War games parade before the world (Gautam Datt)

New Delhi, Nov. 16: India is set to display its firepower before nearly hundred defence attaches from across the world. The India Army's "open-up" policy had been restricted to holding war games with foreign forces so far. Desert Strike, to be held in Rajasthan on Friday, will for the first time see a live demonstration of the country's firepower capabilities. The event will also mark the first time China will be witness to war games on this side of the border. The Indian Air Force, too, is sending a component of its fighters and attack gunships that assist the army in pounding enemy territory with precision-guided bombs. Defence attaches of around 100 countries, along with special observers from the People's Liberation Army (PLA) of China, have been invited to witness the exercise. The lead in the confidence-building move between the neighbors was taken by China, when it invited Indian observers for a similar exercise in 2004.

The Indian Express, 18 November 2005

IAF show leaves US forces spellbound (Shiv Aroor)

Cope India 2005 Kalaikunda, November 18: As the Cope India 2005 Indo-US air force exercises wound down today after two weeks of feverish action in the eastern skies, the US Air Force were left with a stark, double-edged realisation. One - that it is no longer the unchallenged leader in the skies, and two-for all future joint operations in South Asia, the IAF would, without doubt, be its natural partner. Vice Commander of the US Pacific Air Forces Lt Gen Dave Deptula said: " I have never seen a better executed exercise in my 29 years with the USAF. This will go a long way towards establishing peace and stability in the region. Every single objective of this exercise has been met. It was not the US against India. It was an exercise on how to operate together."

The Tribune, 18 November 2005

AWACS makes debut in Indian skies (Vijay Mohan)

Kalaikunda, November 17: The most noticeable aspect of Cope India 05, the joint training exercise between Indian and the US Air Forces here, was the use of an airborne warning and control system (AWACS). An E-3 Sentry was flown in by the US for the exercise and this is for the first time that an AWACS has been used in the Indian skies. An AWACS, with its electronic radar and surveillance equipment, is like an eye in the sky and can detect and track a large number of aircraft over a wide area. It gives commanders a complete picture of the skies and can therefore, advice and guide friendly forces to intercept hostile aircraft.

The Tribune, 18 November 2005

Singapore to hire air base in India

Kalaikunda, November 17: Singapore is hiring the facilities of the vast Air Force station here to train its air force. This is for the first that a foreign country would be utilising Indian facilities to conduct their own training programmes and also pay for the same. Singapore is sending eight F-16 aircraft in January for carrying out their training here, Air Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Eastern Command, Air Marshal F.M. Major told The Tribune here today. 'They will stay here for about two weeks and carry out training exercises,' he added. This would be the second time in three months that Kalaikunda, which was built during the World War II, would be hosting F-16s on its tarmac. This month, US Air Force F-16s are operating from this base during Cope India 05, a joint Indo-US air exercise.

The Tribune, 19 November 2005

US lady pilot all praise for IAF (Vijay Mohan)

Kalaikunda, November 18: It was the one-to-one simulated combat missions against the IAF's mighty Su-30 and

the agile MiG-29 that left her spellbound, amazed and impressed. For Capt Shannon Schneider, an American F-16 fighter pilot flying with and against the IAF was the most exciting and memorable of her experience during Cope India - 05, the joint Indo-US air force exercise which concluded today. "I flew seven missions during the exercise and it has been an awesome experience," she said. "The IAF pilots are very professional and it has been a very good training ground for us," she added. Missions included interception and attack. Though there were several women in the USAF contingent that was here for the exercise, she was the only women pilot amongst them. She is currently serving with the 13th Fighter Squadron based at Misawa in Japan. This was the first time she was participating in a joint exercise with a foreign air force.

The Tribune, 20 November 2005

Aircraft deal: Russia offers MIG-35s

Moscow, November 19: The fight for the contract of 125 fighter aircraft, which the Indian Air Force (IAF) is looking to purchase, is due to carry on till the very end with none of the prospective parties involved in the future bidding process ready to give up in the favor of the other, especially the USA, which seems to be ahead of the others in common perception as of now. While the French , who are offering the latest version of the Mirage-2000, have decided to go till the very last and are also making intense preparations It is an all out preparation for the war here in the city that is so used to bloodier versions of war. The Russians have made their intentions clear to fight tooth and nail till the contracts are not decided as the stakes are very high. It will be one of the biggest contracts in the Indian Defence history. The Russian government and MiG (Russian Aircraft Corporation) are undertaking drastic changes and unprecedented preparations to get it.

The Asian Age, 22 November 2005

IAF may offer short tenures

New Delhi, Nov. 21: In an attempt to attract potential fighter pilots, the Air Force wants to give them the option of a shorter tenure. Unlike with Army officers, there has been a reluctance to offer short service commission (SSC) to pilots. The reason - the government doesn't want them to leave mid-career because it spends a lot of money on their training. But the long, mandatory tenure puts off the brighter people from applying for the job: a regular commission means that you have to put in at least 20 years before the IAF will consider letting you go. Apart from allowing a short service commission for officers in the Flying Branch, the Air Force also wants that up to 50 per cent of its officers - in all branches - should be inducted under SSC. According to a rough estimate, only about 15 per cent of all IAF officers at present are serving under SSC. In fact, for the last few years, there had been a complete freeze on SSC recruitment in the Air Force - even in the non-flying branches. The only exceptions were women officers, being inducted in the service since 1993. A Cabinet decision a few weeks back revived SSC for the Air Force. But that decision only applied to officers in the non-flying branches. Male pilots still don't have the option.

The Tribune, 24 November 2005

IAF benefit for SSC officers likely

New Delhi, November 23: The government is soon expected to give its nod to an Indian Air Force (IAF) proposal to allow Short Service Commission (SSC) officers to become pilots, giving a great opportunity to the young graduates of the country. At present, only women SSC offices are allowed to be pilots in the IAF, and in fact, the SSC for men had been fully stopped for past three years. According to IAF officials, the force is now set to resume not only Short Service Commission for men but also allow officers from SSC to become pilots. This means a graduate who is about 21 years old could join the IAF, become a pilot, obtain the costly commercial pilot's licence at IAF expense, gain experience and quit after 15 years to join the civil sector.