

The Tribune, 3 October 2006

Centre mulls shortcut to get multi-role aircraft (T.R. Ramachandran)

New Delhi, October 2: Considering the desperate need of the IAF to replace its ageing Russian inventory of fighter aircraft with 126 multi-role combat aircraft to meet its growing strategic needs, the government is actively considering overriding the "request for proposals" with a "request for quotations" from various jet vendors. Such a change in tack is expected to facilitate changing to the fast track lane in acquiring the 126 multi-role combat aircraft. Early last month the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi, had disclosed that the IAF would float a request for proposals for fighter jets very soon and suppliers would be given six months to close the deal estimated at \$ 9 billion. Air Chief Tyagi had explained that once the choice was finalised, the first lot of around 20 jets would be acquired within 42 or 54 months and the rest made in the country. Leading the fray are Russia's MiG 35, Boeing's F 18 Super Hornet fighter, Lockheed Martin's F-16F Desert Falcon, Typhoon Eurofighter, French Rafale and Swedish Grippen. The IAF is keen to clinch the giant order before the middle of 2007 as the new fighters will form the backbone of the service for the next two or three decades. Under its new arms acquisition guidelines, all defence deals worth over \$ 70 million will be used as "offsets". This requires foreign vendors to buy defence or procure other specified equipment locally from Indian suppliers

The Tribune, 3 October 2006

Indian Air Force grounds MiG 29 fighters

Chandigarh, October 2: Following the crash of a MiG-29 " the IAF frontline counter-air fighter " near Ambala last week, the Air Force has "grounded" part of the fleet for extensive checks, it is learnt. Sources at the Adampur airbase in Punjab, where two of the IAF's three MiG-29 squadrons are based, told The Tribune that flying operations had been suspended till further orders. An MiG-29 from Adampur had crashed while on a routine sortie after both its engines had seized or flamed-out. Failure of both engines of an otherwise reliable design is stated to be "one in a million" chance. "The situation is what we refer to as aircraft-on-ground (AOG), where the entire fleet may not be affected by a particular snag, but flying operations are put on hold simply as a precautionary measure till the exact cause of an accident is established," a senior officer at Air Headquarters said.

The Hindu, 4 October 2006

Combat aircraft will be upgraded Pranab Mukherjee

Kolkata: Combat aircraft will be upgraded keeping the security environment in mind, Defence Minister Pranab Mukherjee said on Tuesday. "It is a job of constant upgrading and procurements will take place accordingly," he said to a question about the fate of the 126 multirole aircraft the Indian Air Force planned to acquire. The Army still suffered a shortfall of 10,000-12,000 officers but with the implementation of the Ajay Vikram Singh Committee report to reduce stagnation, there was now scope for faster promotion up to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel. The new Pay Commission would look into the problems of the armed forces, he said speaking to presspersons on the sidelines of a seminar on defence-industry partnership, organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry in association with the Directorate-General, Resettlement, Ministry of Defence here.

The Hindu, 9 October 2006

Tyagi dismisses reports of dwindling fleet strength

NEW DELHI: Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal S.P. Tyagi's parajump to take the salute was the highlight of the annual celebrations of the Indian Air Force as it entered its platinum jubilee on Sunday. "Apart from being the guardian of Indian airspace, the IAF also ensures the vital interests of a resurgent India, which extends well beyond its shores," he told newsmen at the Hindon air base outside the national capital while seeking to dismiss reports of the IAF's dwindling fleet strength. The IAF chief dwelt on the number of planned inductions including more re-fuellers, early warning planes, helicopters and fighters to drive home the point that the force today had evolved into one with much longer reach and endurance than was the case a decade ago. In his speech to airmen, he said the IAF was now capable of protecting India's interests abroad as well.

The Tribune , 9 October 2006

Scintillating show marks Air Force Day

Hindon, October 8: Shifting for the first time the venue of its annual Air Force Day parade from the Palam air base in Delhi to the outskirts of the Capital at Hindon in Ghaziabad (UP), the Indian Air Force (IAF) today presented one of the grandest ever displays of its frontline fighter jets, helicopters and mid-air re-fuellers in a traditional fly-past. The IAF marked its 74th anniversary with a thrilling display, featuring frontline fighters like Mirage 2000 and Sukhoi 30 MKI, helicopters Mi-26, Mi-17, Mi-35 and Chetaks, transport aircraft IL-76 and the ever-scintillating display by aerobatics teams Suryakiran and Sarang. The flypast and parade, held at Palam since years, were shifted to Hindon to give the IAF more space to display its might and also to avoid disruption of commercial national and international air traffic to and from the Capital. At present, Hindon is primarily a helicopter base. Fighters were shifted out of here due to excessive bird activity in the area.

Hindustan Times, 10 October 2006

124 tanks, 126 jets to be acquired by 2009: Minister (PTI)

Chandigarh, October 10, 2006: India will acquire 126 multi-role combat jets for the air force and 124 main battle tanks for the army by 2009, Minister of State for Defence Production Rao Inderjit Singh said in Chandigarh on Tuesday. The letters of intent for the fighters have already been received from US, French, Swedish and British companies and it will take a few months for the request for proposals to be issued, Singh told a meet-the-press programme in Chandigarh. "We will induct the fighters in phases," he said, adding the Indian Air Force's ageing MiG-21s are scheduled to be phased out by 2011. He said the 66 Hawk advanced jet trainers purchased from Britain's BAE Systems would soon begin arriving. Five Arjun MBTs were recently given to the army and they had been thoroughly tested and found satisfactory.

The Pioneer, 10 October 2006

Inventory info a click away as IAF goes high-tech

New Delhi: An air warrior now need not run from one department to another looking for an exact size for his pair of flying boots. He will get the exact information at the click of

a button at the personal computer. Elaborating this phenomenon on a larger scale, the entire inventory of the IAF is now stored in the chips courtesy information technology and the operational commander knows where his missiles, fuel dumps and other critical components are stored. Union Pranab Mukherjee dedicated this network known as Integrated Materials Management On-line System(IMMOLS) to the nation here on Monday. Incidentally, this was the first major project to be commissioned on the first day of the platinum jubilee of the IAF and the Minister said this project was an example of the defence-private industry partnership and lauded the role played by Tata Consultancy Services in the project.

The Indian Express, 14 October 2006

Kargil: Ex-army, air chiefs agree to disagree

New Delhi, October 8: The chiefs of the army and the air force at the time of the Kargil war, Gen VP Malik and Air Chief Marshal Anil Tipnis, today put up a united face, agreeing to disagree on their perceptions of the 1999 conflict, but shaking on the fact that while the fighting was on, the three armed forces chiefs were "perfectly united". The two had a brief chat today at the Air Force Day reception, the same day that Tipnis wrote his first essay on the Kargil conflict, a piece many in the army have found distasteful, even condescending. At the air force event today, the two former chiefs decided to meet soon and discuss their differences. Gen Malik, meanwhile, has decided to incorporate a few pages in the second edition of his book as a reponse to Gen Pervez Musharraf's account of the Kargil war.

Asia Tribune, 18 October 2006

IAF's strategic reach

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has just conducted an exercise code named "Gagan Shakti" in the Western and South Western Air Commands. In territorial terms, the operational area of these two commands covers the entire plains of Punjab as also the desert of Rajasthan and extends deep into the Arabian Sea. It must have provided a realistic replication of threat assessment and power projection in defence and attack across our western land frontiers and into the maritime domain. South Western Army Command has been created recently. It has the potential to live up to the doctrine for "effect-based operations." In essence that would mean the optimal utilisation of not just air and land based military assets but also that available in the maritime ambience a combination designed to ensure swift, effective action over a wide theatre...

The Times of India, 19 October 2006

MiG-29 crashes in Bengal, pilots injured

SILIGURI (WB): A Mig-29 fighter plane crashed into an open field near Kadamtala village in north Bengal's Jalpaiguri district on Thursday morning, Superintendent of Police S Tripurari said. The plane's two pilots ejected and touched down with the help of parachutes but fractured their legs in the process, he said. The plane caught fire soon after the crash at around 10.15 am. One of the pilots was taken to Hasimara Airbase Hospital, while the other was admitted to Alipurduar hospital, police said....

The Hindu, 23 October 2006

IAF to become leaner and meaner

NEW DELHI: The Indian Air Force (IAF) is likely to emerge as a more potent force in the next five to 10 years with the modernisation of its fighter planes at a cost of about Rs. 20,000 crore. Officers say the squadron strength will keep falling because retirements, mostly of MiG variants, will outstrip inductions. However, the remaining fighter craft will be faster, have better detection and combat systems and more endurance. The upgradation plan, parts of which are already under implementation, is scheduled for five more years and will involve the modernisation of 300 aircraft. Several aircraft in the inventory will either be retired or made to serve the remaining years of service life....

The Pioneer, 25 October 2006

IAF hand glider takes off for national record

A powered hang glider expedition, undertaken as part of the IAF's platinum jubilee celebrations, was flagged off on Tuesday from Hindon Air Base near Delhi. The glider comprising two crew members, including Wing Commander Ramakant and Sergeant SK Yadav will fly a distance of more than 3,500 km to set up a new national record after traversing the distance from Delhi to Dibrugarh(Assam)....

Indian Express, 26 October 2006

Antony at helm, IAF revives plan for Kerala base

NEW DELHI, OCTOBER 25: Its plans to set up an Aerospace Command at Akkulam in Tiruvananthapuram nipped in the bud a little over a year ago, the IAF is now looking to new Defence Minister A K for a favourable response. A day after the Kerala leader was named for the job, the IAF, it's learnt, began planning a presentation on the proposed new command. Apart from Antony's roots " he is the second Defence Minister from Kerala after V K Krishna Menon" other circumstances are also optimum for the IAF to revive its proposal. At the end of this month, Air Chief SP Tyagi will be the seniormost of the three service chiefs, and will consequently become Chairman of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, the highest armed forces advisory body to the Defence Ministry, though he will still have to navigate resistance from the Army and Navy, both of which oppose monopolisation by the IAF of any future Aerospace formation...