

US India Defense Cooperation leaps forward from buying- selling and Intelligence Sharing to Strategic Partnership

The US has offered to jointly manufacture F-16 fighter jets and has approved the sale of Guardian drones to India for long surveillance missions in the Indian Ocean where Chinese ships and submarines are increasing their presence. The US has agreed to release the technology for the advanced Electromagnetic Aircraft Launch System (EMALS) for the Indian Navy's under development future aircraft carrier, INS Vishal.

"In their first conversation, Secretary Mattis committed to build upon the tremendous progress in bilateral defence cooperation made in recent years, underscoring the strategic importance of the US-India relationship and India's role in advancing global peace and security," said the Pentagon Press Secretary Jeff Davis. Recognising India's status as a 'Major Defence Partner', the US has made necessary changes in its export control laws that would benefit India by facilitating smoother transfer of technologies and arms to it.

The designation as a Major Defense Partner, the joint statement noted, is a status unique to India and institutionalises the progress made to facilitate defence trade and technology-sharing with India to a level at par with that of the United States' closest allies and partners, and ensures enduring cooperation into the future.

India and the United States are seeking to “re-energise” their defence technology and trade partnership to support expanded emphasis on joint development and production, the Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has said. The three-day visit by US Defense Secretary James Mattis to India was the first to New Delhi by a senior official in the Trump administration. The main objective was to outline a joint defense strategy and to enhance overall cooperation between the two countries. Numerous sources reported that talks aimed at deepening coordination in the Indian-Pacific naval arena, as well as enhancing India’s role in targeting terrorist infrastructure in Afghanistan.

These talks include potential collaboration on land systems and additional opportunities for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) system. Underwater surveillance systems such as sonars and sonobuoys are of particular interest to India as it is augmenting its capabilities to keep track of the increasing Chinese naval presence in the Indian Ocean.

“The heart of that is to create cooperative technology and industrial relationships that are not just the buyer-seller kind,” the secretary said. “Both we and the Indians want to move beyond that, and there’s no reason why that can’t occur in the sense that industry wants to do it. We’re very willing to be flexible, creative. We are being that with a number of pathfinder projects.” The agreement requires both countries to cut through the “historical burden of bureaucracy,” he said. “It’s the burden that we carry forward from the fact that we were two separated industrial systems for so long

during the Cold War,” Carter said. “It just takes time to get the two of them together.”

Asked about India and the US firming up close defence ties during the recent visit of US Defence Secretary James Mattis, Chinese Defence Ministry spokesman Col Wu Qian said ,”We hope that the military cooperation between India and the US will be conducive to regional peace and stability but not the opposite.”

Deepening Strategic partnership

In June 2015 Defense Secretary Ash Carter and Indian Defense Minister Manohar Parrikar signed a 10-year defense framework agreement, highlighting the growth of defense cooperation between the two countries. After the Summit-level meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and US President Barack Obama, India and the United States agreed to extend their defence agreement for another 10 years. Out of that meeting grew the Defense Trade and Technology Initiative. The summit meeting at Washington between President Barack Obama and Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June resulted in India being designated as “a major defence partner of the United States.”

In a joint statement, Parrikar and the U.S. Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter said discussions ranged from “increased strategic and regional cooperation, to deepened military-to-military exchanges, to expanded collaboration on defense technology and innovation.” The Logistics Exchange Memorandum Of Agreement allows for reciprocal exchange of logistic support, supplies, and services between the two armed forces. This includes food, water, fuel, spare parts, repair, transportation, communication and medical services.

US has been asking India to complete the ongoing negotiations on concluding the three foundational pacts, out of which one has already been signed. These two pacts are Communication and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (BECA).

The Sides reaffirmed their commitment to work together as priority partners in the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean region in accordance with the roadmap for cooperation under the India-U.S. Joint Strategic Vision for the Asia Pacific and the Indian Ocean Region. In this regard, they welcomed the convening of the inaugural Maritime Security Dialogue in May 2016 and engagement on maritime domain awareness, including through a White Shipping Agreement. They also decided to strengthen cooperation in the area of connectivity.

Recognizing the growing threats and challenges in cyberspace and the serious risks to national security from malicious cyber activity, both Sides reaffirmed working together to promote cyber security, combat cyber-crime, advance norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace, improve cooperation among technical and law enforcement agencies, and promote cyber R&D and capacity building. In this context, they welcomed the signing of the Framework for the India-U.S. Cyber Relationship.

The countries have been exchanging intelligence information as well as in our training and exercises under counterterrorism cooperation agreement. India and the US will enhance their counterterrorism cooperation, by sharing exchange information on their respective citizens who may be going off to Syria,

Iraq or any other new terror hotspot. The intelligence cooperation will stretch to the defence forces who will now exchange their own sets of information and intelligence. The Sides reiterated their condemnation of terrorism in all its forms and reaffirmed their commitment to dismantle safe havens for terrorist and criminal networks such as Da'esh/ISIL, Al-Qa'ida, Lashkar-e-Taiba, Jaish-e-Mohammad, D Company and its affiliates and the Haqqani Network. The Sides called on Pakistan to bring the perpetrators of the 2008 Mumbai and 2016 Pathankot terrorist attacks to justice.

New Delhi is also on the cusp of sealing a US nuclear reactor deal worth billions of dollars. In return, Washington has given New Delhi access to high-end military technology, such as a new system to launch planes off aircraft carriers, and leaned on other countries to give India membership in the Missile Technology Control Regime, which cleared the way for the sale of the unarmed Predator. India's military has also asked for the armed version of the Predator to help target suspected militant camps in Pakistan but US export control laws prohibit such a transfer.

United States has become the second largest defense equipment supplier to India.

Over the past three years, Russian defense deals with India exceeded 340 billion rupees (over \$5 billion), with the United States coming in at a close second with 300 billion rupees (around \$4.4 billion) in deals. U.S. defense contractor Boeing alone has won bids to supply the Indian military with ten C-17 Globemaster-III strategic airlift aircraft (worth \$4.1 billion), eight P-8I maritime patrol aircraft (worth \$2.1.

billion), 22 AH-64E Apache, and 15 CH-47F Chinook helicopters (both helicopter deals have a combined worth of \$2.5 billion). Besides, India is now a country with which the United States conducts the largest number of peace-time military exercises bilaterally every year (nearly 70).

According to defence analysts, India – the world's largest arms importer – is poised to spend \$250 billion in the next decade to modernise its armed forces by acquiring more lethal weapons and combat jets. India has raised the FDI cap in defence sector recently from 26 per cent to 49 per cent with an aim of boosting indigenous defence production. Foreign investment beyond 49 per cent has now been permitted through government approval route, in cases resulting in access to modern technology in the country or for other reasons to be recorded. The condition of access to 'state-of-art' technology in the country has been done away with.

The US will also sell the famous MRAP vehicles to India to counter IEDs especially in the Maoist-hit areas for security forces who are frequently killed in landmine and IED blasts. The two sides are likely to sign is 145 ultra-light M-777 howitzers (worth \$885 million), meant to be deployed by India's new mountain strike corps which will essentially be China-centric. US has offered India high grade technology for the next generation of Indian Navy vessels. Indian navy are in the process of building over 40 different classes of warships and destroyers.

The sanctions on DRDO – that were placed after Pokhran II in 1998 , were lifted off in 2011. So far, DRDO and the US Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency have agreed only to joint development of explosive detection systems and C4I

systems. The Sides noted the ongoing progress on the Engineers and Scientists Exchange Programme (ESEP) Agreement between India and the United States, which would further strengthen bilateral co-operation in defense research.

The two-way Indo-U.S. trade has also quadrupled in just seven years from \$25 billion in 2006 to about \$100 billion in 2013. Two sides are now targeting increasing trade to \$500 billion in near term. The enhanced bilateral relations are a result of a significant increase in government-to-government dialogue, US Ambassador Richard Verma said. "We have broken every record that we keep in every category... The highest two-way trade numbers ever between the countries last year has reached USD 109 billion; the highest defence trade numbers last year was USD 15 billion; we even did USD 6 billion cumulatively in agri trade," he said at the USA-India Innovation Forum in New Delhi

Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI)

India's defence Ministry has cleared a proposal that could give impetus to the first joint defence development project between India and United States for new, lightweight, protective clothing for soldiers. The project has been named as Defence Trade and Technology Initiative. The initial amount allocated for the project is Rs 300 crore. The Indian Army has planned to modernize it and also have plans to acquire chemical and biological resistant clothing in the current five year plan

US has sold equipment worth Rs 60,000 crore in the last 10 years to India but none of these weapon sales programme is about joint production or co-development and does not include

transfer of technology. However, the Indian side is not too inclined to off-the-shelf purchases, and would instead push for arrangements that would galvanise Indian defence industry in partnership with US firms. Modi is pushing for greater participation by US defense companies in forging partnerships with domestic defense companies to boost the domestic defense industry.

The DTTI initiative is aimed at co-development and co-design of defence equipment, weapons platforms and other military technology. Nine working groups have been established under the initiative, which aims to promote co-development and co-production of military technologies for use by both countries. The latest group set up recently is on new naval systems, such as sonars and sonobuoys, which are of interest to India. Two other joint working groups – one for development of new aircraft carriers, and the other to design new jet engines.

The Defense Trade and Technology Initiative (DTTI), the body responsible for working out areas of joint development in defense, has several weapon projects on the table, Some of the technologies are big data for predicting terrorist attacks and for smart surveillance, anti-tank Javelin missile, the Hawk 21 surface-to-air missile and magnetic catapults, which help larger planes take off from smaller ships. In addition to LEMOA, two “pathfinder projects” were announced, to co-develop a Digital Helmet Mounted Display; and so was a Joint Biological Tactical Detection System for protection for individual soldiers from chemical and biological weapons

The US believes this because India is currently the world

fastest growing economy in the world, it will have the largest middle class, college graduates, holders, and mega cities. "...two-third of the population is less than age of 35 and there will be massive investment in infrastructure... So, we are quite optimistic and we are quite excited about India," US Ambassador Richard Verma said. To achieve this, India would have continuously take reform measures on the policy sides besides stronger Intellectual property (IP) framework, Mr Verma said.

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