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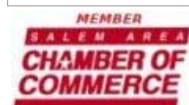
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Mar-07-2009 21:15  

Israel's Military Supplies to India

By Hari Special to Salem-News.com

Alliances between nations are getting harder to track, and they have certainly changed since the end of the Cold War.

(TORNOTO, Canada) - India's main supplier of advanced military hardware is Israel. In the 1990s India took a major decision to procure arms from Israel after its much-touted Defense Research and Development Organization failed to develop any high-end weapons systems.

To keep abreast of its neighbors, from 1965 till 1997 India purchased weapons from the Soviet Union, and later Russia - the preferred choice for the last 40 years as its weapons were cheap, reliable, rugged and direct copies of advanced weapons in the West. Almost 70 percent of India's weapons are of Russian origin.

The fall of the Soviet Union halted its secret development and sales of weapons, thereby letting the West develop countermeasures.

Short of cash, the new Russian Federation from 1990 to 2001 sold its trade secrets to anybody who wished to buy them. In short, India lost its advantage with Russian hardware, as China bought everything that India already had. Also, countermeasures developed by the West for Russian hardware became available to Pakistan. In short, India was at a disadvantage on both fronts.

A lot of technology that India wanted from the West was unavailable because the West viewed India and the Soviet Union as allies, due to the Cold War attitude prevalent in Washington. Israel stepped in to fill the breach, as it had enough influence to change U.S. policy on this issue. It was a win-win situation for Israel and India.

India negotiated its first large-scale contract with Israel in 1997 for the Barak-1 weapons system. This was meant to knock down Pakistan's Harpoon anti-ship missiles, supplied by the United States. Since its initial supply of six Barak systems, eight more have been added and negotiations on a multi-billion-dollar Barak-2 system is in progress.

Prior to the contract, India's defense scientist and former President Abdul Kalam paid a number of visits to Israel to get help in missile development. Later India tested its Prithvi and Agni missile systems to counter Chinese and Pakistani moves.

During the Kargil War in 1999, India received from Israel unmanned aerial vehicles, laser-guided bombs and other hardware to knock out Pakistani hilltop bunkers. Israel's support helped India appreciate its sophisticated electronics and weapons systems.

Russia's former President Vladimir Putin, noting India's declining interest in Russian weaponry, made offers to sell it more sophisticated weapons like T-90 tanks, advanced destroyers, an aircraft carrier and upgrades to existing air force hardware. India accepted the offers, but Israel had already secured a foothold in India's lucrative military hardware market.

End-user agreements between the United States and Israel limited the transfer to India of any U.S.-developed or assisted military hardware - but Israeli political interests in Washington made short work of all U.S. objections.

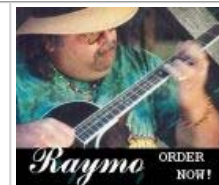
Showing great interest in the Indian market, Israel in 2002 transferred the highly sophisticated Green Pine Radar to India, despite U.S. objections. Today this radar is a key component of India's ballistic missile defense tracking system.

The United States, realizing that Israel will find ways to sell India its military technology, have now folded up their objections. It took them more than 50 years to throw out their Cold War-era attitude; now they are bidding for a US\$10-billion Indian fighter contract.

In the last 10 years India's military imports from Israel have included:



Indian Arjun tank
 Courtesy: defencetalk.com



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- Barak -1 anti-ship missile system
- Unmanned aerial vehicles of various types
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- Green Pine radar
- AWACS
- Spyder surface-to-air missile system
- Aerostat radars
- Service contract to upgrade MIG fighter aircraft
- Electronic countermeasures and air-battle support electronics

The total contract value of these and other purchases is close to US\$9 billion. This is a huge amount given that India and Israel established diplomatic and trade relations only in 1992. The two countries' intelligence agencies have had contacts for much longer, however.

Military contracts under negotiation between India and Israel include the development of Barak -2, worth US\$2.5 billion; additional AWACS at \$1.8 billion; UAVs worth \$500 million; the Arrow anti-missile system at \$4 billion; and miscellaneous electronics worth \$2 billion.

Why did India turn to foreign weapons suppliers? Fifty years ago former Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, in establishing the Defense Research and Development Organization, envisioned 80 percent self-sufficiency in arms by the turn of the century. That dream never came true.

The DRDO had difficulty marrying high concepts with sound engineering. Thus many major systems on the drawing board did not become potent weapons. Although it had a staff of 30,000, 51 laboratories and a US\$2.5-billion budget, the organization operated under technical and critical-component constraints for the last 50 years. It has spent more than US\$50 billion and produced very little.

The army has had many problems with the INSAS rifle developed by the organization, and nobody wants the main battle tank it developed. Its many tactical missiles have never met their defined parameters, and the Kaveri engine for light combat aircraft has been under development for three decades.

The only successes it can claim are the Prithvi, Agni and Brahmos missiles, some light combat aircraft and the multi-barrel Pinaka artillery system. However, it had to import the highly accurate Russian Smerch system to supplement the underpowered Pinaka.

The DRDO's worst failure has been its inability to reverse engineer some of its imported weapons systems. Even Pakistan with its low technology has successfully reverse engineered military hardware.

China reverse engineered the highly sophisticated Russian SU-27 fighter jet.

Russia has now fallen behind as a military supplier to India, although it continues to provide some systems. The renegotiation of already negotiated deals between the two countries has complicated the partnership.

For example, a deal on the Russian aircraft carrier Gorshkov is being renegotiated. The Russians have also refused to transfer technology to manufacture the T-90 tank gun, although it was part of the contract. The supply of a nuclear submarine has fallen behind by several years. Added to this, the quality of Russian hardware and technology is suspect.

The Russians have reopened several of their supply contracts and are exploiting their spare parts supply position to extract more money. All of this is not sitting well with the Indians, who may over the next two decades dump them as important suppliers.

Thus in the past 10 years Israel, and now the United States, are coming on board to supply India with military hardware. There are distinct differences in the manufacturing philosophies of Russia and the United States. While Russian hardware is rugged, U.S. hardware is like a finely tuned sports car; although buyers like its performance it is three times more expensive to maintain than the Russian. Most underdeveloped countries still prefer Russian hardware.

In the end, it is good that Israel stepped in to fill the technology gap India was forced into. Now the Indian military has a distinct advantage over its adversaries.

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Vic March 8, 2009 2:19 pm *(Pacific time)*

So, if the Israelis are selling their military hardware, why are we giving them billions of dollars worth of ours? So they can sell theirs ? Sounds to me like after 60 years of welfare, maybe Israel can stand on its own for once, and we can take care of ourselves and use our foreign aid money for countries that need it, not ones like Israel that have a higher standard of living than we do.

Dencouch March 8, 2009 1:46 pm *(Pacific time)*

http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2009/02/205_39599.html It looks as if the U.S. lost the contract to South Korea for Advanced Missile RADAR, and the Israelis win out with their Green Pine RADAR. Perhaps their hardware is better than ours now.

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