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5 Indian Warplanes Vanish in Ukraine During Modernization Work – Report

By The Moscow Times

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Five Indian military transport planes being modernized by the Antonov aircraft company in Ukraine have vanished, defense industry publication Defense News reported, citing an Indian air force official.

"These five aircraft are almost lost, as it is difficult to trace them and diplomatic efforts to find their whereabouts have failed," the official told Defense News.

The upgrades were part of a $400 million deal, signed in 2009, to modernize over 100 of India's aging Antonov An-32 military transports. 40 of the planes were delivered to Ukraine for the project, while 64 were to be modernized in India under supervision from Ukrainian engineers.

A diplomat from Ukraine's embassy in New Delhi said the Ukrainian government could not assist in locating the planes and that the Indian air force would have to resolve the issue with Antonov, Defense News reported.

Antonov did not respond to a request for confirmation that the five planes are missing or unaccounted for. The other 35 aircraft have been sent back to India.

Work on modernizing the An-32s in India has also come to a halt due to the conflict in Ukraine, where Russia-backed separatists have declared independent states. Amid the crisis, Ukrainian engineers have returned home and Antonov has ceased shipments of spare parts to India.

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