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Russia and India Negotiating Modernization of Aging Russian Fighter Jets

By The Moscow Times

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Indian Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter jet

Russia and India are in negotiations over the modernization of New Delhi's fleet of Sukhoi Su-30MKI fighter jets as a long-standing aircraft deal with France continues to teeter on the verge of collapse, opening the market for Russian manufacturers.

The Su-30MKI is the backbone of India's fighter jet fleet, with around 200 in service in the Indian Air Force. It is a heavily upgraded version of the 1990s-era Su-30 and is produced locally by India's state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) in partnership with Russia.

"Negotiations are being carried out with our Indian partners for a comprehensive modernization of the Su-30MKI, the first deliveries of which took place around 20 years ago,"

Konstantin Biryulin, deputy director of Russia's Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation.

The modernization process includes new communications and data links, as well as new radar equipment said Biryulin, the head of Russia's delegation to the Paris Air Show in Le Bourget, which began on Monday.

The negotiations are taking place against the backdrop of a stalled multibillion-dollar India-France fighter deal. Since agreeing to the deal in 2012, logistical hurdles in establishing localized production of France's Rafale fighter jet, a key condition of the sale, have prevented the contract from being finalized.

Earlier this year, Indian media began reporting that New Delhi may axe the deal and look for alternate suppliers of foreign aircraft to staff its aging air force. If the deal is cut, Russia is uniquely positioned to pitch its own aircraft as it can already point to its successful localization of the Su-30MKI.

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