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India to Buy 48 More Russian Mi-17 Military Helicopters

By The Moscow Times

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A Russian Mi-17V-5 helicopter

India plans to buy 48 new Russian-made Mi-17 military helicopters, news agency RIA Novosti reported Tuesday, citing an Indian air force spokesman, in a move that would cement Russia's place as a key supplier of military hardware to India's armed forces.

The comments by the spokesman came after Indian newspaper The Economic Times reported on Monday that the Indian air force would sign a deal with Russia for the delivery of 48 Mi-17V-5 military transport helicopters for $1.1 billion.

"The Indian air force really has proposed to purchase an additional 48 Mi-17V-5 helicopters. However, the price and other financial aspects of the proposal cannot be disclosed," Singh Birdi told RIA.

The agency also cited an unidentified Russian defense industry source as saying the contract

could be signed next year.

The deal would deepen India's attachment to Russian choppers. According to RIA, the Indian air force has received 121 Mi-17V-5 helicopters over the past five years, and has over 300 Russian Mi-8 and Mi-17 helicopters in service.

India is Russia's largest arms customer. According to data published by the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute earlier this year, since 2010 India has accounted for almost 40 percent of Russian arms exports.

Russian-built equipment in India's arsenal include high-ticket items such as aircraft carriers, other large naval vessels, airplanes and helicopters.

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