



India Upgrades Its MiG-29s

OE Watch Commentary: A lot of attention over the past year on the Indian government’s procurement for its armed forces has been on the acquisition of the S-400 missile system from Russia and the ongoing controversy over a deal with the French company Dassault for a multirole fighter. While these are significant developments, the accompanying excerpted article reports on a recent upgrade of a number of India’s MiG-29 fighters and there are a couple of important things in the article to note.

The article mentions that the upgrades come at a time when the Indian government “is battling a shortage of fighter aircraft,” part of which has been related to the Rafale controversy. The controversy started a number of years ago when the Indian government put out a bid for 126 multirole fighters, awarded the French company Dassault the contract in 2012, only to rescind it a few years later. The government reached an agreement with Dassault in 2016, but the deal only included the purchase of 36 of Dassault’s Rafale multirole fighters, with the first set of deliveries to take place sometime in 2019.

The Rafale agreement has been mired in allegations within India that Prime Minister Modi’s government chose Dassault because of its partnership with the domestic Hindustan Aeronautics Limited. There have been reports that the Indian government will retire its inventory of MiG-29s within the next 10 years (most likely those in the air force, but naval MiG-29Ks could remain in service longer aboard the country’s lone aircraft carrier) and it is believed that the upgrades will fill the gap until then. Lastly, the upgrades include “mid-air refueling” and took place for MiG-29s based at “Adampur Air Force Station,” which is located in northern India and has been noted as an important part of operations in past conflicts with Pakistan. **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**

“The strategically important Adampur Air Force Station, which is around 100 km from Pakistan and 250 km away from China, is now equipped with upgraded MiG-29.”

Source: “MiG-29 gets upgrade, gains in lethality,” *The Tribune*, 8 October 2018. <https://www.tribuneindia.com/news/punjab/mig-29-gets-upgrade-gains-in-lethality/664924.html>

The India Air Force’s beast — MiG-29 — has gained in strength and ferocity after an upgrade, giving the force, which is battling a shortage of fighter aircraft, a much-needed boost, according to officials.

The Russian-origin aircraft, now capable of effecting mid-air refuelling, is compatible with latest missiles and can launch multi-dimensional attacks, Flight Lieutenant Karan Kohli, who is deployed at Adampur Air Force Station, said... Last week, the upgraded MiG-29 showcased its combat capabilities at Adampur station...The upgraded MiG-29 also has a Multi-Functional Display (MFD) screen.

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IAF MiG-29 at Aero India 2009.

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