



Bypassing the “Make in India” Initiative

OE Watch Commentary: The government of India’s deal to manufacture the AK-203 rifle in India through a licensing agreement with Kalashnikov Concern has been delayed due to a requirement as part of the “Make in India” initiative (see: “An Update on India-Russia Security Cooperation,” *OE Watch*, April 2020). In order to fulfill the army’s urgent need for rifles, it appears that the Indian Ministry of Defense is bypassing the initiative and acquiring a number of light machine guns from Israel. The accompanying excerpted article discusses this deal.

The article from *Force*, a news website with a focus on military and security issues in India, reports how the Indian defense ministry signed an agreement “with an Israeli firm called Israel Weapons Industries for procurement of 16,479 Light Machine Guns under the Fast Track Procedure (FTP) in a bid to modernize Infantry.” A statement from the defense ministry notes that the light machine gun is the “Negev 7.62X51 mm” (the Negev NG-7) and that the acquisition is “operationally urgent.” The article also notes that this is not the first time in the past year that the defense ministry (under the previous minister Nirmala Sitharaman) fast tracked acquisition of a weapon. It mentions how “Indian Army has already inducted its newly acquired American SiG 716” and the army reportedly put these into service with units in the Northern Command. The article does not say where exactly the newly acquired Negevns will be put into service, but that they “will boost the confidence of the frontline troops.” **End OE Watch Commentary (Stein)**



An IWI Negev Light Machine Gun of the Special Action Force (SAF).

Source: Rhk111 via Wikimedia, https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:IWI_Negev_Machine_Gun_@_SAF_36th_Anniversary_Exhibit.jpg, CC BY SA 4.0

“On 19 March... the Ministry of Defence (MoD) acquisition wing signed a... contract with an Israeli firm called Israel Weapons Industries [to procure] 16,479 Light Machine Guns, under the Fast Track Procedure (FTP) in a bid to modernize Infantry.”

Source: “India to Procure 16,479 Light Machine Guns From Israel,” *Force*, 20 March 2020. <http://forceindia.net/india-procure-16479-light-machine-guns-israel/>

...The Ministry of Defence (MoD) acquisition wing on 19 March 2020 signed a Rs880 crore contract with an Israeli firm called Israel Weapons Industries for procurement of 16,479 Light Machine Guns under the Fast Track Procedure (FTP) in a bid to modernise Infantry.

“The contracted Negev 7.62X51 mm LMG is a combat proven weapon and currently used by several countries around the globe...The provisioning of this operationally urgent and very critically needed weapon will boost the confidence of the frontline troops and provide much needed combat power to the Armed Forces,” MoD announced in a statement.

...This move comes after the 2019’s approval by the then defence minister Nirmala Sitharaman to procure the Sig Sauer rifles. The Indian Army has already inducted its newly acquired American SiG 716.

An expected contract to induct more than 7 lakh AK-203 assault rifles which are going to be produced in the joint venture between India and Russia is also due.