

India issues tender for 22 Combat Helicopters

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has issued a tender to acquire 22 combat helicopters to replace the nearly same number of 1980s Soviet vintage Mi 35 helicopters.

Chief of Air Staff Air Chief Marshal F.H. Major told India Strategic defence magazine that the tender, or Request for Proposals (RfP), had been issued among others to Boeing for Apache AH 64, Eurocopter for Tiger, Russian Mil Helicopters for Mi 35 (new version), and Bell for its AH 1Z Super Cobra.

The air chief said the RfP was issued May 23, and that the vendors had been given three months to submit their proposals. After that, field trials of those helicopters that are short-listed would be carried in line with the Defence Procurement Policy (DPP).

The interview was conducted while the air chief released India Strategic's Berlin Air Show supplement on air show's inaugural day May 27. Its full report is being published in its June issue but an advance copy has been made available to IANS.

According to the report, Air Chief Marshal Major said that the acquisition of the new combat helicopters was part of the 'IAF's Transformation Process' for which the government was giving full support.

The emphasis was on acquiring the best available platforms, sensors and weapon systems with Glass Cockpits and Beyond the Visual Range (BVR) capability for engagement of hostile targets.

Like its combat jets, all the helicopters in the Indian Air Force inventory are old but, said Air Chief Marshal Major, in about 10 years time the helicopter fleet would be transformed fully.

It may be noted that Indian officials have witnessed flights demonstrations of the competing helicopters at various air shows. Some manufacturing companies have also given video demonstrations of their equipment to generate interest.

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