

## Field trial for multi-role aircraft by year-end

The Indian Air Force (IAF) will conduct later this year field trials for the medium multi-role combat aircraft (MMRCA) it intends purchasing. The scrutiny of the technical bids submitted by six vendors was on, IAF chief Air Chief Marshal Fali H. Major said Thursday.

'MMRCA technical evaluation is going on in full flow. The six vendors have submitted technical bids, each consisting of 8,000 to 9,000 pages. It is really a nightmare to scrutinize the bids,' Major told reporters at the United Services Institution (USI) here.

The deal is worth \$10 billion and 50 percent of this has to be reinvested in India as part of the offset obligations of the manufacturer that gets the IAF nod.

Three global aircraft majors Monday submitted their industrial reinvestment offer as part of their bid for an Indian Air Force (IAF) order for the 126 combat jets, with one company - EADS - reiterating its invitation to India to partner the future development of its Eurofighter Typhoon, one of the six jets in contention.

US aerospace majors Boeing and Lockheed Martin also submitted their offset offers Monday.

The IAF had floated its request for proposal (RFP) last August and these are currently being evaluated, after which the aircraft will be put through field trials before the eventual winner is selected.

Apart from the Eurofighter Typhoon, the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet, and the Lockheed Martin F-16, three other aircraft - the Swedish Gripen, the French Rafale and the Russian MiG-35 - are also in the fray. The other three manufacturers are yet to submit their offset offers.

EADS, Boeing and Lockheed Martin all said they were more than willing to discharge their offset obligations.

EADS, the European Aeronautic Defence and Space company, is a four-nation conglomerate of Germany, Italy, Spain and Britain.

Boeing said it would discharge its offsets obligations through 'a formidable industrial line-up' that includes 16 leading aerospace and defence companies with combined revenues of over \$454 billion, and its 37 Indian partners in the public and private sectors.

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