DASSAULT: FRENCH SALE OF RAFALES TO INDIA STILL BEING NEGOTIATED

News / Manufacturer



The contract for the sale of 36 Rafale fighters to India has not yet been signed, manufacturer Dassault Aviation said March 10. Four weeks was thought to be enough time to conclude the transaction when the heads of state of France and India reached agreement on the sale in late January.

“We are getting closer; we are trying to finalize the price,” CEO Eric Trappier said during Dassault’s annual press conference, held at its Paris headquarters. The Indian government is “always wanting more” but “at some point, one has to make up his mind,” Trappier added.

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Referring to the Indian government's "Make in India" policy, Trappier said Dassault and its French partners are looking for local companies in India capable of manufacturing Rafales. Offsets are being devised to pave the way for a hoped-for 90-aircraft deal in the mid term. "It would not be worth it for them to gear up for 36 examples but it will be for 90," he said.

Last year, two Mirage 2000s were upgraded and delivered in France to the Indian Air Force. The remaining upgrades will be performed by Hindustan Aeronautics in Bangalore, Trappier pointed out.

The other hot prospects for Rafale sales are Malaysia and UAE, but Trappier did not elaborate. In Switzerland, after a referendum thwarted a deal with Saab for 22 Gripens, talks have resumed there, he said. The need would be to replace two fighter types—the Boeing F/A-18 and the Northrop F-5. Dassault has also received a request for information from Belgium and has opened an office in Brussels.

Egypt, the first export customer of the Rafale, has received six fighters. The latest three were delivered in January. "All are fully operational, flown by Egyptian pilots," Trappier said. The next three will be delivered next year.

Qatar, the second export customer of the Rafale, paid a first deposit late last year. The first delivery is scheduled for 2018, a year that will see a share increase in deliveries. Production is now ramping up, approaching two Rafales per month. Deliveries, however, will be slow in 2016 and 2017, at nine and then four Rafales. This will include six and then one delivery to French forces.

The Rafale's firm backlog now stands at 83 fighters. Dassault is developing the F3R version, equipped with the air-to-air Meteor missile, a new-generation laser targeting pod and a new refueling pod, aiming for operational capability in 2018.

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