

Lockheed Martin sees India as next big aerospace, defence hub

VRISHIKUMAR

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US aerospace and defence major Lockheed Martin expects India to be next major defence and aerospace hub with several major deals set to be finalised with the Government and between Governments.

The diversified company, which already has presence in India for more than 25 years, and now with a manufacturing/assembly facility, in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems Ltd, in Hyderabad, is closely watching the progress of major defence deals, which could trigger development of the local industry and manufacturing.

After the commissioning of a new facility in partnership with TASL at the aerospace park in Adibatla near Hyderabad international airport, senior executives of Lockheed Martin ex-

plained how aerospace and defence in India could be next major opportunity and have potential to become big like the automotive sector over the past few decades.

Phil Shaw, Chief Executive, Lockheed Martin India, Abhay Paranjape, Chief Operating Officer of Tata Lockheed Martin Aerospace Ltd, and John R Losinger, Integrated Fighter Group Communications, explained how the corporation was keenly watching the progress of some of the large defence procurement deals, which could trigger big local development.

Paranjape said Lockheed Martin had initiated a process for Indian manufacturing about 7-8 years ago even before the Government initiated the defence offset policy. Significantly, the manufacturing facilities that get created in India



Phil Shaw, Chief Executive, Lockheed Martin India

have the potential to not only serve the Indian requirements but also play a role as a regional hub.

F-16 hub

"Potentially, India could emerge as a manufacturing hub for F-16. Just as the aviation industry has grown in Turkey over the years for F-16 and fighter planes, there is poten-

tial for India to become a major hub for F-16s," Losinger said. The beauty of F-16 is it could potentially put India in the large global supplies chain. But the outcome depends on the Government procurement decision, he said.

Shaw said, "There are more than 70 suppliers with whom we are in touch who could become our suppliers. They include a number of small and medium enterprises. We are prepared and we have a head start."

Helicopters, javelin

"Over the years we have supplied C-130s in 2010 and another 6 last year. Other areas of interest for us are Navy helicopters, multi-role helicopters. That is one area where Lockheed Martin and Sikorsky are looking to Government and are ready to offer Seahawk Plat-

form that is proven and operates around the world," Shaw explained. "We can help navy acquire them quickly as we have a line up," he said.

"We continue to be in discussions with the Government and there also Government to Government engagement on various deals. The latter includes Javelin weapon systems, anti-tank guided missiles and vehicle mounted capable ones," he explained.

The navy helicopter and multi-role helicopter progress has immense potential for development work.

Shaw explained: "Defence procurement world over is a long process and India is no exception. However, the quicker the orders come the better." These defence deals have potential to strengthen business back home while also creating new jobs in the US and India, Shaw said.