

Lockheed Martin to make F-16 wings in India with Tata



The US-based company has offered to move its entire F-16 manufacturing base to India

PHOTO: REUTERS

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The wings of Lockheed Martin's F-16 fighter jets will be produced in India, the US security and aerospace giant announced on Tuesday, in a major boost to the 'Make in India' initiative.

Maryland-based Lockheed Martin has entered into an agreement with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) for the production of the wings.

Lockheed officials insisted that the planned F-16 wing production in India is not contingent on India selecting the F-16 for the air force. Lockheed has offered to move its entire F-16 manufacturing base to India. But India is yet to take a decision on it.

Producing F-16 wings in India will strengthen Lockheed Martin's strategic partnership with TASL and support the 'Make in India' initiative of the government, the company officials said.

"Building F-16 wings in India is a natural next step that builds on our successful partnerships with Tata on the C-130J [Super Hercules airlifter] and S-92 [helicopter]," said Vivek Lall, vice-president of strategy and business development for Lockheed

Martin Aeronautics. "This is a strategic business decision that reflects the value of our partnerships with India and the confidence we have in Tata to deliver world-class products," Lall said.

Lockheed Martin's broader proposed F-16 ties with India — to produce F-16s exclusively in India for its air force and export customers — stands firm, the company said.

Lockheed submitted a comprehensive, fully compliant 600-plus page request for information response to the Indian Air Force.

Last year, Lockheed Martin and TASL announced their intent to join hands to produce the F-16 Block 70 in India if the jet is selected by the Indian Air Force.

The F-16 Block 70 features advanced avionics, a proven active electronically scanned array radar, a modernised cockpit, advanced weapons, conformal fuel tanks, an automatic ground collision avoidance system, an advanced engine, and an industry-leading extended structural service life of 12,000 hours.

To date, 4,604 F-16s have been procured by 28 customers. Around 3,000 operational F-16s are flying today with 25 leading air forces, including the US Air Force.