

India, US ink \$1bn deal for 6 more Super Hercules

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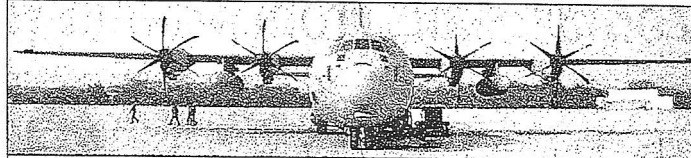
New Delhi: The ongoing diplomatic kerfuffle over the Devyani Khobragade episode is no hurdle as far defence deals with the US are concerned. India and the US have inked another mega contract, the \$1.01 billion one for six additional C-130J "Super Hercules" aircraft, while some others are being finalized.

Defence ministry sources said the "letter of offer and acceptance" for the six new four-engine C-130Js, which will be delivered within three years, was signed on Friday under the US government's "foreign military sales" (FMS) programme. IAF already has six C-130Js tactical airlift aircraft, ordered for \$962 million in 2007, which are based at the Hindon airbase on the outskirts of Delhi. The six new C-130Js, also configured for "special operations" as the first six, will be based at Panagarh in West Bengal.

Panagarh will also house the headquarters of the new mountain strike corps, christened XVII Corps with a total of over 80,000 soldiers, being raised by the Army in a project worth around Rs 90,000 crore. This new corps will plug operational gaps along the 4,057-km Line of Actual Control (LAC) as well as give "some serious ground offensive capabilities" against China for the first time.

The rugged C-130J, as also the bigger C-17 Globemaster-

BIG-TICKET DEFENCE AGREEMENTS



INKED DEALS

2002 | \$190 million for 12 AN/TPQ-37 **firefinder weapon-locating radars**

2006 | \$92.5 million for **amphibious vessel USS Trenton**, with 6 UH-3H helicopters

2007 | \$962 million for 6 C-130J **'Super Hercules' aircraft**

2009 | \$2.1 billion for 8 P-8I long-range **maritime patrol aircraft**

2010 | \$170 million for 24 **Harpoon Block-II anti-ship missiles** for Jaguar fighters

2011 | \$4.1 billion for 10 C-17 **Globemaster-III** giant strategic

airlift aircraft

2012 | \$822 million for **99 GE F-414 engines** for Tejas Light Combat Aircraft

2013 | \$1.01 billion for six more **C-130J Super Hercules**

PROPOSED DEALS

➤ 145 M-777 ultra-light **howitzers** for \$885 million

➤ 22 heavy-duty **Apache attack helicopters** for around \$1.4 billion

➤ 15 **Chinook heavy-lift helicopters** for around \$1 billion

➤ 4 more P-8I **maritime patrol planes** for over \$1 billion

III strategic airlift aircraft acquired from the US, can even land at a small forward airbase on a semi-prepared runway. Crucial to counter China's massive build-up of border infrastructure, this capability was amply demonstrated when IAF landed a C-130J on the Daulat Beg Oldi airstrip in eastern Ladakh, at an altitude of 16,614-feet just 7-km from the LAC, in August this year.

The US has already bagged deals close to \$10 billion over the last decade in the lucrative Indian defence market. The other deals on the anvil are the ones for 22 Apache attack helicopters, 15 Chinook heavy-lift

choppers, four P-8I maritime patrol aircraft and 145 M-777 ultra-light howitzers, together worth another \$4 billion or so.

"The CNC (contract negotiation committee) for the Chinooks has completed its work, while the one for the Apaches is on the verge of finalization. The M-777 howitzers' contract was stuck on the offsets proposal but is now being sorted out," said a MoD source.

That's not all. The US is also in the contention for the over Rs 15,000 crore project to equip the 355 infantry battalions of the Indian Army with third-generation, shoulder-fired anti-tank guided missiles.