

# Lockheed signs pact with Tatas to make F-16s in India

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LOCKHEED MARTIN and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) have signed a pact affirming the intent to join hands to produce F-16 Block 70 fighter planes in India. The announcement comes days before Prime Minister Narendra Modi travels to Washington for a meeting with Donald Trump on June 26.

"This unprecedented F-16 production partnership between the world's largest defence contractor and India's premier industrial house provides India the opportunity to produce, operate and export F-16 Block 70 aircraft, the newest and most advanced version of the world's most successful, combat-proven multi-role fighter," the two companies said.

Lockheed and Tata said moving production to India would still retain jobs in the US. F-16 production in India supports thousands of Lockheed Martin

and F-16 supplier jobs in the US, creates new manufacturing jobs in India, and positions Indian industry at the centre of the most extensive fighter aircraft supply ecosystem in the world, the companies said. "This agreement builds on the already established joint venture between Lockheed Martin and Tata and underscores the relationship and commitment between the two companies," said N Chandrasekaran, chairman of Tata Sons.

"Our partnership significantly strengthens the F-16 'Make in India' offer, creates and maintains

numerous new job opportunities in India and the US, and brings the world's most combat-proven multi-role fighter aircraft to India," said Orlando Carvalho, executive vice president of Lockheed Martin Aeronautics.

The Lockheed Martin-TASL F-16 partnering agreement builds on TASL's proven performance manufacturing airframe components for the C-130J airlifter and the S-92 helicopter. With more than 4,500 produced and approximately 3,200 operational aircraft worldwide being flown today by 26 countries, the F-16 remains the world's most successful, combat-proven multi-role fighter ever produced. The F-16 Block 70 is the newest and most technologically advanced F-16 ever offered.

The letter of intent was signed by Sukaran Singh, CMD of TASL and George Standridge, V-P of strategy and business development of Lockheed. Ratan Tata, chairman emeritus, Tata Sons and Orlando Carvalho, Executive V-P, Lockheed, were also present.