

# TEJAS, WORLD'S LIGHTEST FIGHTER, IS 'BATTLE READY'

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Making a mark: A Tejas aircraft flies over the U.S. Air Force's Boeing C-17A Globemaster III on Wednesday. AP

Mark I (MkI) Tejas, the Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) designed and developed in India, on Wednesday overcame its last hurdle by finally bagging what is called the FOC certification.

The FOC or final operational clearance, coming on the first day of Aero India 2019, certifies that the world's lightest fighter plane is "ready for battle."

As its stakeholders stood in front of an LCA prototype, endorsements of the LCA's fire power came in from none other than its prospective user — the Chief of Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Birendra Singh Dhanoa — who said, "It is ready, it behaved like a true fighter. This is the proof of the pudding." The Indian Air Force (IAF) would look beyond MkI, too.

Defence Secretary Sanjay Mitra hoped that the LCA-MkI would soon be inducted into the IAF.

## Ready to start

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) is also ready to start producing 16 LCAs in the improved FOC version, HAL Chairman and Managing Director (C&MD) R. Madhavan said. The first 16 are almost fully delivered.

With an LCA prototype in the background, Secretary, Defence R&D, Dr. G. Satheesh Reddy, declared the aircraft FOC compliant.

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