NAVY GETS 12TH P-8I AIRCRAFT FROM BOEING

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Leading the pack:The P-81 aircraft escorted by fighter jets during a demonstration in Visakhapatnam.File photo | Photo Credit: K_R_DEEPAK

Aircraft manufacturer Boeing has delivered the 12th P-8I long-range maritime patrol aircraft to the Indian Navy. This completes the follow-on clause for four additional P-8I aircraft contracted in 2016.

"The P-8I is an integral part of the Indian Navy's fleet and has surpassed 35,000 flight hours since it was inducted in 2013," a statement from company said.

In May 2021, the U.S. State Department approved the possible sale of six additional P-8I aircraft and related equipment, a deal estimated to cost $2.42 billion.

Earlier, in November 2019, the Defence Acquisition Council approved the procurement of the six aircraft.

The number was cut down from 10 to six due to budgetary constraints as also the Navy undertaking fleet rationalisation and deciding to go for long-endurance unmanned platforms.

The six aircraft under discussion will come with extensive upgrades, officials had stated.

As reported by The Hindu earlier, the six P-8Is will come installed with encrypted communication systems since India has now signed the foundational agreement Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA) with the U.S. The Navy had procured eight P-8Is under a $2.2 billion deal in 2009. In 2016, the Navy exercised the optional clause for four more P-8Is in a deal worth over $1billion. The Indian Navy was the first international customer of the aircraft.

Several complex and mission critical P-8I components such as the radar fingerprinting system, IFF (I/T) and datalink, speech secrecy system, mobile satcom system and wire harnesses were made in India by supplier partners, including Micro, Small & Medium Enterprises located across the nation, Boeing said.

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