

MULTI-NATION AIR EXERCISE CANCELLED

Relevant for: International Relations | Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed & developing countries on India's interests

The multi-nation air exercise Cobra Warrior with NATO countries Belgium, the U.K. and the U.S. along with Sweden and Saudi Arabia scheduled to be held in March, which the Indian Air Force (IAF) was to join for the first time, has been cancelled against the backdrop of the Ukraine crisis.

Citing "recent events", the IAF on Saturday said on social media it has decided not to participate in the multi-nation exercise Cobra Warrior scheduled to be hosted by the U.K., but the post was subsequently deleted. Diplomatic sources stated that the U.K. has decided to cancel the exercise in view of the Russian invasion and offensive in Ukraine.

"In light of the recent events, IAF has decided not to deploy its aircraft for Exercise Cobra Warrior 2022 in U.K.," the IAF said in a post on Twitter on Saturday morning. The post was deleted in a few hours, though no explanation was given as to why.

Ukraine situation

The U.K. informed the IAF on Friday night that the exercise was cancelled, diplomatic sources told *The Hindu* on the status of the planned exercise. "The decision to cancel the exercise makes sense with the situation in Ukraine," an official from one of the participating countries said.

Earlier this week, the IAF announced that it would deploy the Light Combat Aircraft for the exercise at Waddington, U.K., which would have been the maiden deployment in an international exercise for the indigenous fighter.

Five Tejas aircraft were to fly to the U.K. with transport support for induction and de-induction provided by C-17 transport aircraft. This year, the U.K. was to host India for the bilateral air exercise Indradhanush, and instead of which had asked the IAF to join the multi-nation exercise Cobra Warrior.

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