

## US House passes bill on defence co-operation with India

American Congressman Ami Bera during an interview, in New Delhi. (File Photo) | Photo Credit: [Shanker Chakravarty](#)

The U.S National Defence Authorisation Act (NDAA) 2018 passed by the House of Representatives has mandated the Secretaries of Defence and State to come up with a strategy for advancing defence cooperation between India and the U.S in six months. The legislation that appropriates funds for defence will have to be passed by the Senate before it moves for the President's signature.

Indian American Representative Ami Bera, Vice-Ranking Member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, moved the amendment on US-India defence cooperation. Last year's NDAA had designated India as a "major defence partner," and also had a similar provision for preparing a strategy, but the findings of the review has not been published yet. The term, 'major defence partner' remains undefined, but senior officials have explained that after the designation, India's request for arms and technology is treated with a presumption of approval now, as opposed to a presumption of denial that existed earlier.

"The United States is the world's oldest democracy and India is the world's largest democracy. It is vitally important to develop a strategy that advances defense cooperation between our two nations. I am grateful this amendment passed and look forward to the Defense Department's strategy that addresses critical issues like common security challenges, the role of partners and allies, and areas for collaboration in science and technology. Cooperation between the US and India enhances our own defense and our ability to meet the evolving security challenges of the 21st century," Mr. Bera said in a statement.

The bill passed by the House supports the massive hike in defence spending proposed by President Donald Trump, focussing on missile defence, adding more troops and ships, a 2.4 percent salary increase for soldiers. The bill, however, has several provisions that the Trump administration is not keen on. After the Senate passes its version of the bill, both will have to be reconciled.

The bill also asks the administration to pursue the communications interoperability and security memorandum of agreement and the basic exchange and cooperation agreement for geospatial cooperation, the foundational agreements on defence that the U.S is keen to sign with India.

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Nuclear disarmament campaign group ICAN won the Nobel Peace Prize on Friday for its efforts to consign the atomic bomb to history, firing off a

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