

# Obama Visit To Consolidate U.S.-Indian Strategic Military Ties

By [Global Research](#)

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## **Analysis: India, U.S. aim to lift defense ties during Obama trip**

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*And the defense pacts Washington wants India to sign underscore some of those challenges.*

-[T]he growing convergence in defense ties is manifest in India agreeing to buy U.S. military hardware worth some \$10 billion in government-to-government sales in the past two years. The United States has held more military exercises with India than any other country. Two-way trade has risen to close to \$50 billion from just \$5 billion in 1990.

NEW DELHI: When U.S. President Barack Obama arrives in India next month, he will face a key challenge of boosting defense ties that are on the upswing but mired by political suspicion over pandering to Washington's interests.

Underlying the visit will be lobbying for billions of dollars in contracts to overhaul India's mostly Russian-supplied military, a relic of their Cold War era partnership.

Those orders include a \$11 billion deal for 126 fighter jets that could benefit U.S.' Boeing and Lockheed Martin Corp. France's Dassault, Russia's MiG-35, Sweden's Saab and the Eurofighter Typhoon are also competing.

But Washington faces a host of hurdles, including Indian worries that signing defense pacts which are necessary for the U.S. arms sales to go through may land New Delhi into a wider entanglement with the U.S. military.

While Prime Minister Manmohan Singh has reached out to Washington over his last six years in power, many within his own Congress Party as well as his parliamentary allies are reluctant to embrace these pacts, pending over three years.

"India is weighing to see if all these agreements are to give a wider room to maneuver for U.S. forces in the region," said Siddharth Varadarajan, strategic affairs editor at Hindu Newspaper in Delhi.

"There is a mismatch in expectations from the relationship. India wants weapons sales as a transactional relationship, the U.S. is seeking exclusivity in partnership," he said, referring to any U.S. desire to make the Indian military an active element in its strategic expansion in

the region.

A KPMG report this month said the misgivings over the pacts were “roadblocks” in sustaining the momentum in the relationship.

Obama’s challenge is not as much in winning contracts as it is in lifting ties to a long-term military partnership in a region where Washington is now fighting a war and seeking ways to contain China’s rise.

And the defense pacts Washington wants India to sign underscore some of those challenges.

One pact is the Logistics Support Agreement (LSA), which would allow American military to use Indian facilities for operations like refueling. Indians fear India could be used as a launching pad for military operations in the region.

Two other pacts are required under US domestic laws to transfer sensitive defense technology. India fears the military will have to share communications secrets with the United States.

“These agreements need wider consultation. They have various implications,” an Indian defense ministry official told Reuters.

#### DEVELOPING TIES

Once on the opposite sides of the Cold War, India and the United States began warming up to each other about a decade back, the paradigm shift coming with a 2008 civil nuclear deal that then President Bush pushed to end India’s nuclear isolation.

And the growing convergence in defense ties is manifest in India agreeing to buy U.S. military hardware worth some \$10 billion in government-to-government sales in the past two years.

The United States has held more military exercises with India than any other country. Two-way trade has risen to close to \$50 billion from just \$5 billion in 1990.

Indian Prime Minister Manmohan Singh was also the first state guest of the Obama administration last year.

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(Editing by Alistair Scrutton and Sanjeev Miglani; Additional reporting by Jim Wolf in Washington and Henry Foy in New Delhi)

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