

India seeks to purchase patrol drones from US for security of maritime assets

22/06/2016 21:15 by admin

Washington: India has sent a letter of request (LoR) to the US seeking to purchase patrol drones for protection and vigilance of its maritime assets in the Indian Ocean, sources said.

Representative Image

The letter of request (LoR) sent by New Delhi a week ago comes less than a fortnight after India was inducted into Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and recognised by the US as a "major defense partner" after the meeting between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President Barack Obama, earlier in June.

This is part of Modi Government's effort to fast track its goal to secure the country's maritime assets particularly in the Indian Ocean and detect any untoward intrusion like Mumbai terrorist attack.

The letter seeks purchase of state of the art multi mission maritime patrol Predator Guardian UAV's (Unmanned Aerial Vehicle) from General Atomics, they said.

It provides high altitude wide area and has long endurance maritime ISR capability which will help India to safeguard its maritime assets in the Indian Ocean, both east and west coast.

Flying at an altitude of 50,000 feet these drones have the capacity to fly non-stop for more than 24 hours and monitor the movement of objects as small as a football, sources said.

India had previously shown interest in purchasing these drones from the US, but the Obama administration was unable to process these request as India was not a member of MTCR.

After India got the MTCR membership earlier in June, the US has started looking into the proposal and is believed to be moving ahead with the next phase of letter of acceptance.

Earlier this month, President Obama and Prime Minister Modi affirmed their support for US-India cooperation in promoting maritime security, they said.

The issue of drones was discussed by the Prime Minister with President Obama who gave a favourable response.

Referring to the India-US joint statement on June 7 at the White House, the sources said the two leaders reiterated the importance they attach to ensure freedom of navigation and overflight and exploitation of resources as per international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, and settlement of territorial disputes by peaceful means.

It is estimated that India could be looking at over 250 UAV's over the next few years estimated at over \$5 billion.

Its Ground Moving Target Indicator (GMTI) mode provides a quick and easy method for locating moving vehicles, Dr Lall, an aerospace scientist said.

The radar's Maritime Wide Area Search (MWAS) mode provides the capability to complete a variety of maritime missions successfully, including coastal surveillance, long-range surveillance, small target detection, and search and rescue operations. These are also equipped with an Automatic Identification System (AIS) for identifying

vessels at sea,â€• he added.

- PTI