

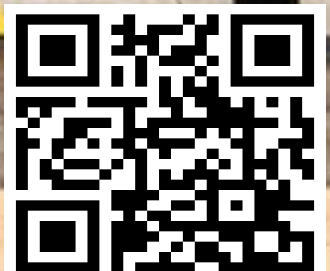
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**India capitalising on strategic
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India capitalising on strategic inroads into Nigeria's defence sector

India is taking proactive steps to solidify its recent inroads in the Nigerian defence industry. With an ambition to compete with global powerhouses like Russia and China, India has been diligently working to increase its presence in the arms trade, particularly focusing on selling domestically produced weapons to African militaries.

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India capitalising on strategic inroads into Nigeria's defence sector

IMAGE: India's Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh takes a sortie in Light Combat Helicopter.

Nigeria's burgeoning defence requirements present a unique opportunity for Indian defence companies to showcase their expertise and forge strategic partnerships to meet Nigeria's evolving security needs.

Ekene Lionel

In a significant move to expand its global defence footprint, India is taking proactive steps to solidify its recent inroads in the Nigerian defence industry. With an ambition to compete with global powerhouses like Russia and China, India has been diligently working to increase its presence in the arms trade, particularly focusing on selling domestically produced weapons to African militaries.

Recently, a 33-member delegation led by Anurag Bajpai, Additional Secretary in the Ministry of Defence, embarked on a diplomatic mission to Abuja. This visit, which commenced on March 7, is a response to Nigeria's interest in fostering collaborative ties with the Indian defence industry, marking a new chapter in bilateral defence cooperation.

The delegation comprises leading defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and private companies, including leading defence Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and private companies including Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL), Bharat Electronics Ltd, Bharat Earth Movers Limited, Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Limited, Goa Shipyards, Advanced Weapons and Equipment India Limited, L&T, Bharat Forge, and MKU Limited forming part of the contingent., highlighting India's commitment to exploring new partnership avenues and enhancing defence collaboration with Nigeria.

The focus is on exploring potential business opportunities in critical areas such as small arms, ammunition, and armoured vehicles. Nigeria's

burgeoning defence requirements present a unique opportunity for Indian defence companies to showcase their expertise and forge strategic partnerships to meet Nigeria's evolving security needs. HAL is offering its indigenous LA-Tejas Mk1A fighter jets and LCH Prachand Attack helicopters to Nigeria.

It was recently revealed that Nigeria is one of the potential buyers of the Tejas fighter jet, a light combat aircraft developed and manufactured by India's Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd. (HAL). The Tejas is a multi-role fighter jet that boasts agility, advanced technology, and robust performance. However, the sale of the Tejas to Nigeria is far from certain, as the aircraft is still unproven in combat and faces competition from other suppliers.

India is hoping to capitalize on its growing presence in Africa to not only sell more of its domestically produced hardware but also to gain access to new markets and further strengthen its global presence. India has

already made strong inroads into the African arms market and is confident that, with the right strategies in place, it can become a major player in the sector and compete with Russia and China for arms deals.

On its part, last September, Nigerian President Bola Ahmed Tinubu approved the finalization of a new \$1 billion deal to boost the country's defence industry. The deal, which was signed with the Managing Arm of the Military-Industrial Complex of the Indian government, will see the Defence Industries Corporation of Nigeria (DICON) become 40% self-sufficient in local manufacturing and production of defence equipment by 2027.

The deal is a major boost for DICON, which has been struggling to meet the needs of the Nigerian military. The corporation has been plagued by chronic underfunding and mismanagement, and it has been unable to produce many of the weapons and other equipment that the military needs.

India's strategic foray into the African defence market reflects its growing aspirations to emerge as a key player in the global defence arena. With the right strategies, India is confident it can become a major player in the sector and compete effectively for arms deals in Africa.

Africa's arms imports decline by over half in a decade, SIPRI reports

Staff Writer

The Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), a renowned independent international institute focused on research into conflict, armaments, arms control, and disarmament, has released its 2023 edition of the Trends in International Arms Transfers. The report reveals a significant reduction in arms imports across African nations, with a 52 percent decrease observed between the periods of 2014-2018 and 2019-2023. This substantial decline is attributed primarily to the reduced arms acquisitions by Algeria and Morocco, which saw decreases of 77 percent and 46 percent, respectively.

During the 2019-2023 period, Russia emerged as the leading arms supplier to Africa, responsible for 24 percent of the continent's major arms imports. It was followed by the United States at 16 percent, China at 13 percent, and France at 10 percent. Sub-Saharan Africa, in particular, accounted for a mere 2.2 percent of global arms imports, with a 9.0 percent decrease compared to the previous five-year span. Nigeria, Angola, and Senegal were the top three arms importers in this subregion.

The arms trade landscape in sub-Saharan Africa is characterized by a diverse array of suppliers competing for influence. China, with a 19 percent share, narrowly surpassed Russia's 17 percent to become the largest arms supplier to the area during the same period. However, both nations experienced notable reductions in their arms exports to the region, with China's exports falling by 23 percent and Russia's by 44 percent compared to 2014-2018.

France maintained its position as the third-largest supplier to sub-Saharan Africa, with an 11 percent share of the arms imports. Türkiye ranked fourth, largely due to its provision of com-

Ghana Armed Forces Pvt. Samuel Darko, Ghana Armed Forces Northern Command, Tamale, Ghana, practices casualty evacuation tactics during African Lion 2023 in Daboya, Ghana, June 9, 2023. African Lion is an annual training event between the U.S. and participating African nations intended to build interoperability and strengthen partnerships. Approximately 8,000 personnel and 18 nations will participate in African Lion 2023 from May 13 - June 18, 2023. (U.S. Army photo by Staff Sgt. William Cowley)



Figure 5. The importers of major arms, by region, 2019-23 and 2014-18, per cent of global share

Note: The SIPRI trend-indicator value (TIV) is a measure of the volume of international transfers of major arms. The method used for the SIPRI TIV is described on the Arms Transfers Database web page.

Source: SIPRI Arms Transfers Database, Mar. 2024.

- Imports of major arms by states in Africa fell by 52 per cent between 2014-18 and 2019-23. This was mainly due to large decreases for two North African importers: Algeria (-77 per cent) and Morocco (-46 per cent).
- Arms imports by states in sub-Saharan Africa decreased by 9.0 per cent. China, which accounted for 19 per cent of deliveries to sub-Saharan Africa, overtook Russia as the region's main supplier of major arms.

bat helicopters to Nigeria and various aircraft and unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) to other states.

Egypt, once the third-largest global arms importer, now ranks seventh, with its arms imports decreasing by 26 percent from 2014-2018 to 2019-2023. Germany stands as Egypt's primary arms supplier, followed by Italy, Russia, France, and the USA. Amidst regional tensions and efforts to bolster its military capabilities, Egypt's recent acquisitions include frigates, submarines, combat aircraft, and long-range missiles from these countries.

On a global scale, the top five arms importers from 2019 to 2023 were India, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Ukraine, and Pakistan, while the leading exporters included the United States, France,

Russia, China, and Germany. The overall volume of international arms transfers in this period saw a slight decrease of 3.3 percent from the previous five years but marked a 3.3 percent increase from 2009-2013.

Asia and Oceania were the largest regional importers of arms, accounting for 37 percent of the total, followed by the Middle East (30 percent), Europe (21 percent), the Americas (5.7 percent), and Africa (4.3 percent). Ukraine stood out as Europe's largest arms importer, receiving 23 percent of the region's total imports.

This report underscores the shifting dynamics of the global arms trade and highlights the changing strategic priorities and economic constraints influencing arms procurement decisions across Africa and beyond.

Nigerian Army Aviation gets funding, reveals its aerial assets

These platforms are crucial for the Army's surveillance, reconnaissance, and patrol operations, providing a significant boost to the nation's defence capabilities.

Ekene Lionel



The Nigerian Army has taken a significant step in bolstering its military capabilities with the establishment of its own aviation corps. This move has been further strengthened by the announcement of a \$3.2 million investment for the construction of the first Army aviation hangar at the Bola Ahmed Tinubu International Airport in Minna, Niger State.

Brigadier General Musa Alkali, the Coordinator of Nigerian Army Aviation, disclosed the development during a meeting with Governor Umar Bago of Niger. The funding for this project is set to be provided by the Pan-African Business Forum as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives, marking a new era in the Nigerian Army's operational readiness.

The new hangar is expected to house an impressive fleet of aerial assets, including 12 MD530 Cayuse Warrior series attack helicopters, 10 Bayraktar TB2 unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), and 8 Magnus light attack aircraft. These platforms are crucial for the Army's surveillance, reconnaissance, and

patrol operations, providing a significant boost to the nation's defense capabilities.

In addition to these assets, the Nigerian Army Aviation will also acquire modernized manned helicopters such as the Bell UH-1D utility helicopter, along with fixed-wing aircraft like the MF-212 light aircraft. The hangar will also accommodate fully autonomous platforms like the Textron Aerosonde UAS and Ziyen UAS Blowfish, enhancing the pilots' ability to operate at a safe distance from potential threats.

The establishment of the hangar is not only a strategic move in terms of asset acquisition but also in improving the efficiency of aircraft maintenance processes, which have previously faced delays.

The Nigerian Army's vision for a robust aerial domain capability has been in the works since 2020 when it announced plans to procure combat platforms, particularly attack helicopters, to support its troops in the north-eastern theater. This vision is

now coming to fruition with the order of eight MF-212 ISR and attack aircraft, Textron systems aerosonde 4.7 VTOL UAVs, ten Bayraktar TB2 drones, 12 MD530 Cayuse Warrior helicopters, and three Bell UH-1D transport helicopters.

Current Nigerian Army aviation capabilities include light transport and utility and unmanned systems in form of two Bell 412EP, three Eurocopter EC135 and a number of Textron Aerosonde MK4.7, Ziyen Blowfish UAS, and other DJI-type commercial-grade drones sourced from the civilian market.

Partnerships have played a pivotal role in this advancement, with the Nigerian Army collaborating with the French Army Light Aviation (ALAT) and receiving support from the California National Guard. Additionally, the Nigerian Army has engaged with India's Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the training of its officers, further solidifying its commitment to developing a competent and technologically advanced aviation unit.

LAND



Javelin production at Lockheed Martin. April 2022. Photo credits: Reuters

U.S. approves sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles to Morocco

Darek Liam

The U.S. State Department has sanctioned the sale of Javelin anti-tank missiles and associated equipment to the North African nation for an estimated \$260 million. This decision underscores the strategic partnership between the two nations, particularly in enhancing Morocco's sovereign defence mechanisms.

The Pentagon announced that Lockheed Martin and RTX Corp are the primary contractors for this deal. The approval by the US Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) on March 19 reflects a deepened commitment to Morocco's security needs.

Morocco's acquisition includes 612 Javelin FGM-148F missiles, which feature 12 fly-to-buy missiles, and 200 Javelin

Lightweight Command Launch Units (LWCLUs). The package also encompasses missile simulation rounds, support equipment, and technical assistance.

The FGM-148 Javelin series is celebrated for its accuracy and efficacy in combat scenarios. Developed in the 1980s and operational since 1996, the Javelin missile system offers state-of-the-art target-locking and infrared guidance. With a maximum range of 2,500 meters, these missiles, manufactured by Lockheed Martin Corp and Raytheon Technologies Corp, are a significant asset in contemporary warfare.

Renowned for its "fire and forget" technology, the Javelin missile is designed to supersede obsolete systems like the M47 Dragon missile. Its precision targeting and adapt-

ability have made it a preferred choice for military forces globally.

Furthermore, the FGM-148 Javelin will complement the Chinese-made HJ-9A (Red Arrow 9) anti-tank missile system, which Morocco showcased during the 67th anniversary of its armed forces.

This arms deal follows the Biden administration's March 2022 action to remove a major impediment in U.S.-Morocco relations concerning Western Sahara. The U.S. issued a waiver permitting defense funds to support Morocco's involvement in joint military exercises.

This arms agreement not only strengthens Morocco's military arsenal but also signifies the growing defense collaboration between the United States and Morocco, marking a new chapter in their bilateral relations.



Kenya bolsters security with Springback armoured personnel carriers

Patrick Kenyatte

In order to enhance national security and combat terrorism, the Kenyan government has taken a bold step by acquiring a fleet of DCD Protected Mobility Springback armoured personnel carriers. On Wednesday, March 20, 2024, the Interior Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Interior and National Administration, Kithure Kindiki, officially commissioned and dispatched the first batch of these state-of-the-art vehicles as part of Operation Maliza Uhalifu.

This strategic acquisition is part of a broader initiative by the Kenyan government to fortify its defense capabilities against the growing threats of terrorism, banditry, and organized crime. The Springback armoured carriers are renowned for their robust design, capable of providing enhanced protection for the officers on the front lines.

The commissioning ceremony was attended

by key figures, including Principal Secretary Dr. Raymond Omollo, Inspector General of the National Police Service Japhet Koome, and other high-ranking officials. Their presence underscored the government's unwavering commitment to neutralizing threats to the nation's peace and stability.

With an investment of Ksh.7.6 billion over the past six months and a projected allocation of Ksh.29.4 billion over the next three years, the Kenyan government is demonstrating its dedication to the Police Equipment Modernisation (PEM) programme. This programme aims to equip the police force with advanced protective gear and mobility equipment, including Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs), Mine Resistant Ambush Protected Vehicles (MRAPs), Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs), drones, gunship helicopters, mine sweepers, and personal protection equipment.

The focus on equipping and kitting frontline officers, especially those deployed in Forward Operating Bases (FOBs) across various regions, highlights the Kenya Kwanza Administration's priority to ensure the safety and security of its citizens.

The Springback SD is the Standard version, the HD is the Heavy Duty and XD is the Xtra Duty, with performance, payload and protection increasing with each model. The 4x4 SD has B6 ballistic protection (up to 7.62x51 mm rounds) and can withstand a TM57 landmine directly under the hull, or two under any wheel. The SD is the lightest in the series and weighs 9 000 kg and has a 1 500 kg payload. It is powered by the MWM 6.10T 6.45 litre six cylinder turbocharged diesel delivering 194 hp.

Kenya's military has been operating the Springback for at least four years, with several surviving improvised explosive device (IED) hits in operations along the border with Somalia. However, until now there has been no official confirmation of this.

This new acquisition is part of an ongoing effort to strengthen the capacity of Kenya's defence and security forces. Over the years, Kenya has acquired a plethora of armoured vehicles.



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Mwari Put Through Its Paces in Wonderboom



Paramount's Mwari

Ekene Lionel

FlightGlobal was recently invited to Paramount's aircraft production and test facility at Wonderboom National Airport near Pretoria to experience the Mwari's capabilities firsthand. The Mwari is a light tactical aircraft designed for low-cost, austere field operations. It is a two-seat, tandem cockpit aircraft with a high-wing and twin-boom pusher design. The WSO sits behind the pilot in a stadium-seating arrangement, offering a wide field of view.

Mwari: The African-Built Tactical Aircraft Taking Flight

In the skies above Wonderboom National Airport near Pretoria, a new contender in the light tactical aircraft market is proving its mettle. The Mwari, a product of Par-

amount's innovative engineering, is a versatile aircraft designed for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, and it's catching the attention of military forces in Africa and beyond.

A Glimpse into Mwari's Capabilities

During a special preview hosted by Paramount, Flight-Global's test pilot Michael Gerzanics took to the air in the Mwari, registration ZU-MWB, for a series of demonstration flights. Accompanied by Paramount's own test pilot, Mark Berg, Gerzanics experienced the aircraft's operational potential first-hand.

The Mwari's design is a testament to its mission-driven purpose. With a rear station equipped with a right-hand

Mwari is a two-crew C4ISR, F3EAD and precision strike aircraft, capable of carrying a wide range of weapons, sensors and systems in extended airborne mission operations.



sidestick, rudder pedals, and a power lever, the aircraft is built for control and precision. The weapon system officer (WSO) benefits from a mission element controller and a 21-inch mission display that dominates the rear station, providing comprehensive control over the Electro-Optical System (EOS) and other mission systems.

Paramount advertises the clean-sheet Mwari as an ideal low-cost aircraft for intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) and so-called F3EAD (find, fix, finish, exploit, analyse and disseminate) roles in austere environments.

Design and Durability

For the “find” aspect, the Mwari boasts a large bubble canopy that offers an expansive field of view for both the pilot and the WSO. The aircraft features a high-wing and twin-boom pusher propeller design configuration was chosen to enhance operations from unprepared surfaces, with the seats arranged in tandem, the aft weapon system officer (WSO) sitting notably higher than the pilot for improved visibility. The Mwari’s primary structure is

aluminium, with composites used for larger fairings.

The pilot’s displays are capable of showing output from the Argos-II sensor, supporting ISR tasks effectively. The aircraft’s design features a slightly forward-swept, high-mounted wing, enhancing its aerodynamic efficiency. The forward-sweep is essential to move the wing’s centre of pressure forward for longitudinal stability considerations. Moreover, the Mwari’s survivability is bolstered by the option to include electronic warfare equipment and ballistic protection panels.

From Concept to Reality

The journey of the Mwari began in 2010 with the Advanced High Performance Reconnaissance Light Aircraft (AHRLAC) program, a collaboration between ADC, Paramount, and Aerosud. Despite facing legal challenges in 2019, Paramount took full ownership of the program and reignited its development, leading to the aircraft’s first deliveries to Mozambique and the Democratic Republic of Congo in late 2022.

The Mwari’s onboard sensors are a critical component of its “fix” function, with the Hensoldt Argos-II EOS being the most prominent. This advanced sensor system, mounted on the lower chin of the fuselage, is equipped with high-definition cameras for both daylight and infrared imaging, along with laser rangefinding and illumination capabilities, making it a powerful tool for surveillance and target acquisition.

The Mwari is equipped with a variety of sensors, including a chin-mounted Hensoldt Argos-II electronic observation/infrared sensor (EOS). The EOS offers a variety of high-definition daylight and infrared cameras, as well as laser rangefinder and illumination capabilities. The aircraft also has a large internal fuselage mission bay that can carry mission-specific pods. These pods can weigh up to 317kg and can be changed out in under 2 hours.

To “finish” the job, for offensive operations, the Mwari can carry a maximum payload of 1,000kg on six external hard-points, across its NATO-stan-

dard 14in racks, an impressive feat for an aircraft with a gross weight of just 4,500kg. The four outboard stations can each carry 280kg of ordnance, while the two inboard stations can each carry up to 300kg of ordnance or external fuel tanks. The aircraft is also capable of carrying a variety of smart weapons, allowing for precise targeting and reduced collateral damage.

While the Mwari does not currently have a visual aiming capability, due to the limited clearance between the canopy and the front cockpit glareshield, however, Paramount is working on integrating smart weapons that can be employed from safer heights and distances from threats, and enabling precise strikes with minimal collateral damage. The aircraft’s internal fuselage mission bay is a testament to its versatility. Capable of carrying various mission-specific pods weighing up to 317kg, this feature allows for rapid reconfiguration to suit different operational needs. The Mwari’s robust electrical system, ca-

pable of supplying 400kW of power, ensures that it can support the demands of modern, electronics-intensive warfare.

The Mwari in the Global Arena

The Mwari is a promising aircraft that has the potential to be a valuable asset for any military, and Paramount’s marketing efforts extended to North America, where the Mwari, rebranded as Bronco II, was a contender for the US Air Force’s Armed Overwatch program. Although it did not secure the SOCOM contract, the Mwari has made significant strides towards South African and US certification, signaling a bright future for this home-grown African aircraft. Paramount is actively working to enhance the Mwari’s capabilities, including the integration of unguided rockets and external gun pods, as well as smart weapons that can be deployed from safer altitudes and distances. These advancements were demonstrated during the Armed Overwatch competition for SOCOM with the Bronco II

variant.

The Mwari stands as a symbol of African innovation in the aerospace industry. Its low-cost operation and adaptability to austere environments make it an attractive option for nations looking to enhance their ISR capabilities. As the Mwari continues to be put through its paces at Wonderboom, it’s clear that this aircraft is ready to soar into the demanding world of tactical aviation.

The Mwari, with its rugged design and multi-role functionality, is poised to become a valuable asset in tactical aviation, especially within its home region of Africa. Its development and production in South Africa highlight the country’s growing capabilities in the aerospace sector and its potential to offer a home field advantage in the deployment of such advanced aircraft.

At the end of the preview flight, Michael Gerzanics noted satisfactorily that “while the turbo-prop light tactical aircraft space is well stocked with established and other new offerings, the Mwari is a welcome addition, with its internal pod system and pending smart weapons integration enabling it to make its presence felt over the battlefield.”



Technicians work on the Mwari aircraft at the Paramount Aerospace Industries manufacturing plant in Pretoria, South Africa, September 19, 2022.

REUTERS/Sumaya Hisham

Unauthorized MRO, Subpar Parts, and Training Gaps: The Potential Culprits Behind Africa's Helicopter Crashes

The frequent helicopter crashes in Africa cannot be solely blamed on the helicopters themselves.

Partner Content

Helicopter crashes are not uncommon in Africa, with some of them causing tragic loss of life. A large part of helicopters used in various African militaries are Russian-made.

According to open data from the Russian Helicopters holding company (late 2019), more than 900 helicopters made in Russia and the USSR are registered in African countries. When it comes to military equipment, the share of Russian helicopters reaches about 40%.

Russian-made helicopters have indeed made significant inroads on the African continent. The most prevalent Russian-made helicopters in Africa belong to the world-famous Mi-8/17 and Mi-24/35 helicop-

ter family, with various modifications. Over 250 of them are Mi-24/35 helicopters.

These helicopters have demonstrated high reliability, survivability, and combat effectiveness in specific African conditions while being used by the Armed Forces of dozens of countries on the continent.

While praised for their reliability and effectiveness, these choppers have also been involved in several unfortunate crashes. While some media attributes these incidents to the helicopters' Russian origin, industry professionals point to other factors: unauthorized maintenance, low-quality spare parts, and inadequate pilot training.

First, it is likely, that insufficient

attention or resources is given by the operators to general operational safety issues, while a helicopter fleet's maintenance and operation requires a systematic approach.

The MRO Maze: A crucial aspect highlighted by experts is the use of unauthorized third-party companies for maintenance and repair. These companies often lack official technical documentation and expertise, raising concerns about safety standards. While Russia offers official MRO contracts after the warranty expires, operators sometimes opt for cheaper, unauthorized alternatives, compromising equipment integrity and putting lives at risk.

At the same time, when delivering helicopters, after the warranty period has expired,

Russia always offers to conclude official contracts for MRO, but the customer often chooses a different path, jeopardizing the safety of the equipment and the lives of crews and passengers.

A Matter of Parts: Counterfeit, low-quality, or second-hand parts used in repairs further exacerbate the problem. A 2018 incident involving a Mi-17-1V helicopter crash in Senegal, attributed to poor-quality repairs in Ukraine, serves as a stark example.

Training Gaps: Pilot error also plays a role in some crashes. Apparently, a number of African countries neglect to organize the further training of helicopter pilots and engineers after completing basic training in Russia. While African operators receive basic training in Russia, subsequent comprehensive training is sometimes entrusted to private contractors with questionable qualifications and experience from third countries (retired military personnel).

This, coupled with potential lengthy gaps in flight operations and inadequate retraining for different helicopter types, can create a recipe for disaster. It is not clear whether technical training equipment is purchased or used.

On the other hand, helicopters flying with the United Nations do not suffer frequent crashes incidents since they follow stringent MRO requirements. Their adherence to Approved Maintenance Organisation (AMO) standards ensures quality maintenance practices.

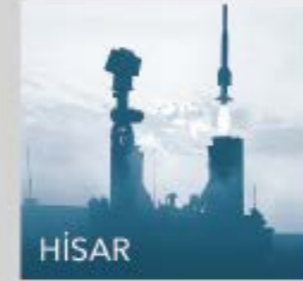
The frequent helicopter crashes in Africa cannot be solely blamed on the helicopters themselves. Unauthorized MRO practices, substandard parts, and inadequate pilot training likely play a significant role. By adopting stricter maintenance procedures, using genuine parts, and investing in proper pilot training, African operators can improve safety and ensure the continued effectiveness of their helicopter fleets.



The Mi-8MTV-5 helicopters are powered by either TV3-117VM or VK-2500 engines. Image courtesy of Russian helicopters, JSC.

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Valerii Copeichin alongside Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni during the commissioning of the first overhauled and Upgraded Russian MI-24 type helicopter at the Nakasongola Air base in Nakasongola District.



US sanctions on Moldovan Businessman could negatively impact on Uganda's Air Force

Patrick Kenyette

The United States' recent imposition of sanctions on Moldovan businessman Valerii Copeichin could have significant repercussions for the modernization efforts of Uganda's Air Force. Copeichin, whose company Pro Heli is instrumental in maintaining Uganda's fleet of Russian-manufactured military aircraft, has been a pivotal figure in the country's defense sector.

Pro Heli, established as a joint venture in Uganda in 2016, works in close partnership with the National Enterprises Corporation Limited (NEC), the commercial wing of the Uganda People's Defence Forces. The company's authorization by the Ugandan government encompasses a wide range of services, including the maintenance, repairs, and overhaul of both civil and military helicopters and aircraft.

This action, taken under Executive Order 14024 and amended by Executive Order 14114, has sparked concerns about its potential ramifications, particularly in Uganda's air force dynam-

ics. According to the a Press Statement of the spokesperson of the United States Department of State, it said that Moldovan businessman Valerii Copeichin "has previously been named in a United Nations report for involvement in weapons shipments to South Sudan."

The sanctions against Copeichin come at a critical juncture, as just eleven months prior, Uganda celebrated a milestone in its defense capabilities with the commissioning of its first locally overhauled Mi-24 combat helicopter. This event underscored Uganda's commitment to bolstering its indigenous defense industry and highlighted the strategic partnership between NEC and Pro Heli.

The Mi-24 helicopter, a cornerstone of Uganda's military might, has seen extensive use in the nation's counter-insurgency operations. The joint venture's establishment of a maintenance, repair, and overhaul (MRO) facility for the Mi-24 in Uganda represents a significant stride in self-reliance and technical proficiency.

However, the US sanctions threaten to undermine these advancements by potentially disrupting the supply chain and technical support provided by Pro Heli. This could delay or even halt the ongoing modernization and upgrade projects crucial for the Uganda Air Force's operational readiness.

Moreover, the sanctions could impede Russia's plans to transform Uganda into a regional hub for the development, upgrading, and maintenance of Russian military equipment and technology. This ambition was articulated by Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergey Lavrov during a press conference in Moscow, highlighting the deepening military cooperation between the two nations.

Uganda's position is further complicated by international pressure, particularly from the United States, to refrain from assisting Russia in circumventing sanctions related to its military actions in Ukraine. Despite this, Ugandan Foreign Affairs Minister Gen Jeje Odongo has expressed the country's intent to maintain and expand its defense capabilities, emphasizing Uganda's role in regional peacekeeping efforts.

The situation presents a complex challenge for Uganda, which relies heavily on Russian military hardware. As the US and European Union intensify sanctions on Russia's defense industries, Uganda must navigate the geopolitical landscape carefully to sustain its military modernization while adhering to international regulations.

President Yoweri Museveni's defense of Uganda's military relationship with Russia is rooted in a historical context that dates back to the era of President Abdel Nasser in 1955. Museveni emphasizes that Russia has been a consistent ally to Africa for over a century, particularly in supporting anti-colonial movements. This long-standing partnership is exemplified by Uganda's collaboration with PRO Heli, which Museveni regards as a logical and beneficial alliance.

The demand for helicopter maintenance, overhaul, and upgrading in Uganda is substantial, and President Museveni advocates for these

services to be conducted within the country. He argues that local maintenance not only makes sense from a logistical standpoint but also aligns with the principle of self-sufficiency.

Furthering this vision, Museveni supports the proposal by PRO Heli's CEO, Valerii Copeichin, to expand the Nakasongola facility's capabilities. The plan includes overhauling and upgrading Sukhoi aircraft and extending services to other African and Latin American countries, including Brazil. This strategy aims to position Uganda as a central hub for aviation services, offering convenience and benefits to a broader international community.

For now, the Uganda Peoples' Defence Forces – Air Force (UPDF-AF) flies its Russian-built Su-30MK2 fighter jets to Belarus for maintenance and repair (MRO) activities, at the 558th Aircraft Repair Plant in Baranavichy.

Copeichin's goal for PRO Heli International Services is to establish the Nakasongola facility as a comprehensive center for all aviation-related needs. This ambition is shared by Gen. James Mugira, Managing Director of NEC, who has highlighted the significant strides made in technology transfer and skill development since the plant's inception.

The sanctions imposed on Copeichin by the US government present a complex challenge to these aspirations. While they aim to curtail Russia's military influence and revenue, the restrictions also risk impeding Uganda's progress in developing its defense industry. The situation underscores the delicate balance Uganda must maintain between fostering its defense capabilities and navigating the international sanctions landscape.

Finally, the sanctions on Valerii Copeichin pose a tangible threat to the operational efficacy and future prospects of Uganda's Air Force. The partnership between Uganda and PRO Heli, and by extension Russia, is a strategic move towards enhancing the nation's defense autonomy. However, the US sanctions against Copeichin could potentially disrupt this trajectory, calling for diplomatic finesse and strategic planning to ensure the continuity of Uganda's defense industry development.

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Djibouti Air Force to get ISR-configured Cessna Grand Caravan EXs from Textron

Patrick Kenyette

Textron Aviation said it was awarded a contract by the U.S. Army for two Cessna Grand Caravan EX turboprops. Under the contract, the Djiboutian Air Force (DAF) will own and operate the aircraft.

The transaction marks the third order under a recent indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity (IDIQ) contract that provides up to \$100 million for the acquisition of aircraft from Textron over a five-year period.

“The two special missions Cessna Grand Caravan EX aircraft will be Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance equipped to ensure the border sovereignty of the country of Djibouti,” said Bob Gibbs, vice president, Special Mission Sales for Textron Aviation. “This multiyear contract allows the U.S. Army Security Assistance Command to rapidly procure Commercial off the Shelf (COTS) aircraft and modifications from Textron Aviation for our Foreign Military Sale allies and partner nations. We are honored to assist in ad-

vancing U.S. national security and foreign policy interests by providing our solutions under the IDIQ and we look forward to further cooperation with the U.S. Army.”

The Cessna Grand Caravan EX is tailored for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, and the aircraft will primarily serve to reinforce the border sovereignty of Djibouti.

Caravans fulfill a broad range of roles that include charter and regional airline operations, freight, humanitarian, VIP transport, skydiving, and other recreational missions. Known for its reliability, versatility, and low operating costs, the Grand Caravan EX also exhibits impressive performance, with its engine providing 867 hp and a climb rate of 1,275 feet per minute.

“The two special missions Cessna Grand Caravan EX aircraft will be Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance equipped to ensure the border sovereignty of the coun-

try of Djibouti,” Textron Aviation Special Mission Sales VP Bob Gibbs stated.

The Grand Caravan EX has a top speed of 304 to 343 kilometers (189 to 213 miles) per hour between its Amphibian and Pod variants.

The 12.7-meter (41-foot) system is powered by Pratt & Whitney’s PT6A-140 engine boasting 867 horsepower and a four-blade aluminum propeller developed by McCauley.

Textron’s latest agreement is part of an indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity framework signed in 2023 to supply aerial capabilities for the US Department of Defense’s allied partners over five years.

“We are honored to assist in advancing US national security and foreign policy interests by providing our solutions under the [indefinite delivery, indefinite quantity] and we look forward to further cooperation with the US Army,” Gibbs said.



Nigerian Navy Dockyard to refurbish Beninois warships



Ekene Lionel

In a landmark move to bolster maritime security in the Gulf of Guinea, the Nigerian Navy has entered into an agreement with the Benin Republic Navy (BRN) to undertake the refurbishment of six BRN warships. This initiative is set to significantly enhance the naval capabilities of Benin and contribute to the safety and security of the crucial maritime region.

The agreement, which encompasses the docking and repair of the Beninois navy ships, was formalized at the Naval Dockyard Limited (NDL) in Victoria Island, Lagos. The signing ceremony took place at the BRN Naval Headquarters in Cotonou, marking a historic moment for both nations.

The Admiral Superintendent of NDL, Rear Admiral Abolaji Orederu, highlighted the significance of the agreement, stating that the warships—BNS PENDJARI, BNS OUEME, BNS ALIBORI, BNS ZOU, BNS MATELOT

BRICE KPOMASSE, and BNS COUFFFO—had already set sail from Cotonou to Lagos. The refurbishment process is expected to span 10 months, during which the NDL will apply its expertise to restore the vessels to their optimal condition.

Rear Admiral Orederu emphasized the strategic importance of the NDL as a national asset and a force multiplier, catering to the defense and maritime needs through the construction, maintenance, and repair of naval platforms. He expressed that the partnership with the BRN is a testament to the regional cooperation and operational efficiency among the navies of the region, fostering stronger ties and enhanced security.

The Beninois Chief of Naval Staff, Captain Jean Le'on Olatoundji, conveyed his trust in the Nigerian Navy's capabilities, recalling the initiation of discussions during his visit to the 66th anniversary of the Nigerian Navy in Lagos.

As at 2012 the Benin Navy has a strength of approximately 200 personnel. It operates two ex-Chinese patrol boats, which are designated the Matelot Brice Kpomasse class. In 2020, the United States supplied two Safe Boats vessels to better protect the Port of Cotonou and Gulf of Guinea coastline rife to increasing maritime insecurity.

The Nigerian Naval Dockyard stands as one of the few full-service shipyards in Africa, equipped to maintain and repair a wide range of naval vessels. Its commitment to enhancing Nigeria's strategic self-reliance in naval and merchant vessel construction, maintenance, and repair is unwavering. With a broad clientele spanning the military, government agencies, and the private sector, the NDL is poised to serve as a principal repair facility for regional navies, further solidifying its role in promoting national and regional maritime security.

Hensoldt unveils Quadome radar to South African Navy

Sarah Lesedi



In a significant display of local innovation and advanced technology, Hensoldt South Africa's Radar business unit recently presented its latest development, the Quadome 3D surface and surveillance radar, to the South African Navy. The demonstration, which took place in late February, was attended by a distinguished delegation from the Navy, including Rear Admiral (JG) Tebogo Motsene and Rear Admiral (JG) Handsome Matsane, among others.

"We are proud to showcase the Quadome radar to the South African Navy, highlighting the remarkable progress we have made in local development," said Bennie Langenhoven, Chief Executive of Hensoldt South Africa's Radar business unit. "This collaboration demonstrates the depth of South African innovation in the defence sector."

The Quadome radar represents a leap forward in maritime security technology. Designed and built locally, it is a testament to the depth of South African innovation in the defence sector. Bennie Langenhoven, Chief Executive of Hensoldt South Africa's Radar business unit, expressed pride in showcasing the radar, emphasizing the progress made in its development.

"The advanced surveillance capabilities of the Quadome can play a pivotal role in enhancing maritime security and safeguarding critical interests, aligning with the SA Navy's vision of being unchallenged at sea and using information to

achieve mission success."

The demonstration aimed to reinforce partnerships and encourage a collaborative approach to the evolving challenges in maritime security. The Quadome radar's advanced surveillance capabilities are expected to play a crucial role in enhancing maritime security and protecting the nation's critical interests. This aligns with the South African Navy's vision of maintaining unchallenged control at sea and leveraging information for mission success.

Hensoldt South Africa also anticipates generating significant foreign direct investment by exporting the system worldwide through the Hensoldt Group's international sales channels.

Hensoldt continued. "In addition to targeting the local market, Hensoldt South Africa expects to generate significant foreign direct investment by leveraging the Hensoldt Group's international sales channels, exporting the system to customers worldwide."

The Quadome radar will undergo rigorous evaluation and sea trials to validate its performance and environmental adaptability, with initial production deliveries expected in the second half of 2025. Hensoldt South Africa specializes in optronics and spectrum dominance solutions and has positioned the Quadome as a versatile radar system suitable for naval, land, and air applications. It boasts an impressive range from 100 meters to 200 kilometers and can process over 1,000 air and surface targets.

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NAVAL

India, Mozambique, and Tanzania naval Exercise IMT Trilat



The Indian Ocean's waters are currently witnessing a significant demonstration of naval cooperation with the ongoing India Mozambique Tanzania (IMT) Tri-Lateral Exercise (Trilat). This exercise, involving two Indian naval vessels, the INS Tir and INS Sujata, alongside the Indian Coast Guard Ship Sarathi, is a testament to the strengthening ties between the participating nations.

The exercise, which spans from March 21 to 29, is not just a display of maritime prowess but also a concerted effort to enhance cooperation and understanding between India, Mozambique, and Tanzania. The first edition of this exercise, held in October 2022, set the stage for what has now become a pivotal event in the naval calendars of these countries.

The harbour phase of the exercise, which took place from March 21-24, saw a flurry of

activities aimed at building camaraderie and skillsets. From damage control and fire fighting to medical lectures and casualty evacuation, the participating navies engaged in a series of joint harbour training activities that fostered a spirit of collaboration. As the ships set sail for the sea phase, which will continue until March 27, they are focusing on practical aspects of maritime security, such as countering asymmetric threats and conducting visit board search and seizure procedures. This phase also includes joint exclusive economic zone (EEZ) surveillance, highlighting the collective vigilance of the navies.

During their harbour stays, the Indian Naval ships opened their decks to visitors, allowing civilians to witness the might of the navy firsthand. Moreover, the crews engaged in sports and cultural exchanges, further cementing the friendly relations between the host navies and India.

New Delhi: Indian Navy's INS Shivalik and Kadmatt undertake Maritime Partnership Exercise with Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force Ships Uraga and Hirado in Bay of Bengal, January 14, 2022. (Photo: Twitter)



Milkor desert sting guided munition

Milkor Showcases Advanced Military Solutions at DIMDEX 2024

Darek Liam

Milkor, a renowned name in the defence industry, has made a significant impact at the Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) 2024, presenting its latest advancements in military hardware. The exhibition, which is a focal point for maritime defence innovation, saw Milkor's Milkor 380 unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) taking center stage.

"We are thrilled to present the MILKOR 380 at DIMDEX 2024," said a spokesperson from MilkOR. "This UAV is the culmination of years of research and development, embodying our commitment to providing advanced solutions that meet the evolving needs of modern warfare. We believe

the MILKOR 380 will significantly enhance the operational capabilities of our clients, offering them an unmatched level of precision, reliability, and control."

Armand Bodenstein, Milkor's Business Development Director, emphasized the company's strategic vision, stating, "Milkor's participation at Dimdex 2024 underscores our unwavering commitment to expanding our global footprint while fostering strong ties with the esteemed Qatar end users. Our engagements with local stakeholders reflect our ongoing efforts to solidify our position as a premier partner for both the Qatar industry and local end users."

The Milkor 380 UAV, the largest ever designed, developed,

and manufactured on the African continent, boasts impressive specifications. It features Halcon Desert Sting 16 glide weapons, Thales FZ602 rocket launchers, and Thales FZ275 LG rockets. With a payload capacity of up to 400 kg under the fuselage and 230 kg under each wing, the UAV is powered by a turbocharged piston engine, offering an endurance of 35 hours and a range exceeding 2,000 km.

In addition to the UAV, Milkor's exhibition includes a diverse array of 40 mm weapons systems, scale models of the Milkor IPC (Inshore Patrol Craft), and the Milkor 4x4 armoured personnel carrier. These showcases represent Milkor's broad expertise and innovation in the defence sector.

Pakistani GIDS demos Shahpar II drone in new marketing drive

The only parts of the Shahpar aircraft system not produced in Pakistan are the engine and tires

Global Industrial & Defence Solutions (GIDS) demonstrates LIVE Firing of its latest Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) Shahpar II (Block II) in Bahawalpur city of Pakistan to high level military delegates from 11 friendly countries.

Global Industrial & Defence Solutions (GIDS) is a Pakistani state-owned defence conglomerate, and the country's largest defence manufacturer, offering products for military applications. GIDS has exported to 16+ countries and is currently under engagement with 30+ countries across the globe.

The promotional demonstration shows Shahpar II drone firing Burq laser guided Air to Ground missiles at still and moving targets with great accuracy. GIDS hopes to capture the attention of these countries militaries in a new push to market it's drone solutions. Nigerian and Kenyan delegates attended the demonstration.

The Shahpar II Block II UAV successfully lazed and locked its target from 14,000 ft and destroyed it using its indigenously developed Burq Air to Ground missiles.

The demonstration also showcased the latest version of Zumr series of Payloads the Zumr 2 HD . The international delegates were much impressed with the thermal imager results and the stability of the footage coming live from the drone.

GIDS management has also revealed that by April 2024 it will be testing its other air-delivered ordnances like the BURQ-II with 20kg warhead , lighter versions of Burq and its Laser Guided Bombs designed for unmanned aerial vehicles.

The management claims Shahpar II Block II to be more capable and affordable than the widely renowned Turkish drone Bayraktar TB-2.

The Shahpar-II is an unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV) built by Global Industrial Defence Solutions of Pakistan. It is currently in production following the completion of a test and qualification phase.

The Shahpar II drone has a length of 8 meters, and a wing-span of 9.45 meters. It can carry an internal payload of 53 Kilograms, and an external payload of 190 Kilograms.

The drone's maximum speed is stated as 120 knots (200km/hours), and a service ceiling of 23,000 feet (7,010 meters), for surveillance, 21,000 feet (6100 meters) when armed.



Barzan Maintenance Shield and HAVELSAN Renew Partnership to Advance Military Training

PARTNER CONTENT



BARZAN Maintenance Shield QSTP-LLC and HAVELSAN proudly announce the extension of their pivotal Simulator Maintenance Support Contract, initially established in 2021, for an additional two years. This extension agreement was unveiled at the distinguished Doha International Maritime Defence Exhibition and Conference (DIMDEX) 2024, symbolizing a strengthened commitment to advancing the Qatar Armed Forces' training capabilities and military readiness.

The agreement not only reinforces the ongoing partnership but also signifies a significant stride towards enhancing the quality and scope of military training within the Qatar Armed Forces. This partnership ensures the continuation of vital AW139 Training Centers Support Services, which are crucial for the operational efficiency and preparedness of the Qatar Armed Forces.

Through this renewed alliance, BARZAN Maintenance Shield QSTP-LLC and HAVELSAN reaffirm their dedication to delivering superior training experiences, ensuring that Qatar's military personnel are equipped with the knowledge, skills, and readiness to meet the challenges of modern military operations. The contract extension marks a milestone in the continued effort to bolster national defence capabilities through state-of-the-art training and technology.

Barzan Maintenance Shield QSTP-LLC (BMS), a wholly owned subsidiary of Barzan Holdings, is a commercial leader for all maintenance, repair and overhaul (MRO) services across Qatar's security and defence sector. In addition to its portfolio of supporting operational aircraft, armoured vehicles and maritime systems, BMS is committed to delivering high-quality, innovative training and support solutions that enhance the capabilities and effectiveness of Qatar's military personnel.

SHAHPAR-III (GROUP 4+ UCAV)

SHAHPAR-II BLOCK II (UCAV SYSTEM)

FATAH-I (ROCKET)

HARBAH NG WEAPON SYSTEM (SUBSONIC CRUISE MISSILE SYSTEM)

TAIMOOR (CRUISE MISSILE WEAPON SYSTEM)

TIPU WEAPON SYSTEM (155MM CANNON LAUNCHED GUIDED PROJECTILE)

FATAH-I (MLRS)

FATAH-II (ROCKET)

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Terrahaptix unveils Archer, a modular multi-mission UAV



Archer modular multi-mission unmanned aerial vehicle

Ekene Lionel

The battlefield has changed. Security threats across Africa are evolving at machine speed. How we solve the critical security crisis needs to change too. One company, Terrahaptix, understands this exceptionally well.

Terrahaptix, a Nigerian defence startup, announced Archer, an autonomous drone with multi-mission capabilities including aerial intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, counter intrusion, and signals intelligence.

Founded just 6 months ago, Terrahaptix designs and manufactures autonomous systems for core industries. The company has made a lot of strides since launching including the acquisition of a 15,000 sq-ft UAV factory in Abuja and the development of Artemis, an AI

command and control software that powers autonomy in its family of systems.

The Archer is a modular, multi-domain UAV that is controlled entirely on the Artemis AI software and requires minimal operator training. It provides real-time intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities that give the operators enough information to make the right decisions. The all-electric powertrain provides up to 3 hours flight time with multispectral sensors such as 4k daytime, infrared, thermal, and LiDar.

One major feature of the Archer is Intelligent Teaming. Basically, one operator is able to command and control large teams of autonomous Archers from a single ground control station. Groups of Archers collaborate to achieve missions objectives that are impossible

to achieve via a single unit. This swarming capability also enhances advanced data collection that would be impossible with a single airframe.

“Archer gives our customers a quiet, rugged, long-range system to complete complex operations in harsh environments”, says Nathan Nwachuku, Executive Chairman at Terrahaptix. “Archer represents a significant leap forward for aerial intelligence in Africa. We will continue to develop autonomous systems to solve the critical security crisis in Africa.”

Terrahaptix has so far been quiet about details on sales numbers and fundraising, but the company teases that a few major contract announcements are on the horizon. The company says its next step is the official launch of its Abuja UAV factory, set to begin production in April/May. ▣

Algeria enhances aerial capabilities with advanced WJ-700 Falcon UAVs



Darek Liam

Algeria has recently bolstered its military capabilities by acquiring four state-of-the-art WJ-700 Falcon unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) from China Aerospace Science and Industry Corp (CASIC), a leading Chinese state-owned enterprise. This strategic move, announced by the Algerian resource ORCA Military on March 13, signifies a significant advancement in Algeria's reconnaissance and combat operations.

The WJ-700 Falcon UAVs, which are currently undergoing final acceptance tests, are expected to be operational in the near future. These UAVs are part of the High-Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) class, capable of engaging targets up to 100 km away with missile strikes and air target neutralization. The procurement of these UAVs comes amidst Algeria's ongoing regional ten-

sions with Morocco, which has also been upgrading its military assets.

Developed by Beijing Haiying General Aviation Equipment, a division of CASIC, the WJ-700 was first unveiled at Airshow China 2018 and took to the skies on its maiden flight in January 2021. Designed for high-altitude, high-speed operations, the WJ-700 boasts a significant payload capacity and the ability to deploy large-caliber ammunition beyond the reach of enemy air defenses. CASIC envisions the WJ-700 serving both domestic and international markets over the next decade.

A notable aspect of the WJ-700 is its size, which enables it to carry substantial payloads, including anti-ship missiles, positioning it as a formidable asset against tactical and

strategic targets such as radar installations, warships, and command centers. The UAV's specifications, as revealed at the Zhuhai Aerospace Salon in 2018, include a maximum take-off weight of 3,500 kg, a payload capacity exceeding 800 kg, a flight duration of up to 20 hours, and an operational ceiling of 15 km. Powered by a turbojet engine, the WJ-700 can reach speeds nearing 700 km/h and is equipped with electronic countermeasures for enhanced survivability.

The People's Liberation Army (PLA) Information Department projects that by 2024, Chinese military UAV sales will constitute approximately 25% of the global market, translating to 17 billion yuan (\$2.6 billion). Over the next decade, revenues from Chinese military UAV sales are anticipated to surpass 110 billion yuan (about \$16.8 billion). ▣



South Africa commences construction of border wall with Mozambique

Sarah Lesedi

The South African government has initiated the construction of a formidable concrete barrier along its border with Mozambique. This strategic development comes as a response to the escalating incidents of vehicle theft and smuggling, which have long plagued the region.

The project, estimated at approximately \$2.7 million, is structured into three phases. The first phase encompasses an 8-kilometer stretch adjacent to Tembe Elephant Park. It will be succeeded by the second phase, which extends another 8 kilometers near the iSimangaliso Wetland Park, and the third phase, spanning 9 kilometers from the western boundary of Tembe Elephant Park to the Pongolo River.

The barrier's efficacy in crime prevention was recently highlighted when perpetrators failed to surmount it with a

stolen SUV, using iron ladders. The ladders collapsed under the vehicle's weight, leading the criminals to set it ablaze in a bid to obliterate evidence.


The South African National Defence Force (SANDF) plays a pivotal role in this initiative, with 15 companies of troops deployed to safeguard the nation's borders, especially the high-risk frontiers adjoining Mozambique, Zimbabwe, and Lesotho.

Construction activities at the Tembe Elephant Park section are in full swing, as reported in a joint briefing by the South African government and KwaZulu-Natal province. The project has garnered positive feedback from local communities and the SANDF alike.

After considerable delays, the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Government has recommenced the erection of the concrete barrier wall. In late 2020, the KwaZu-

lu-Natal Department of Roads and Transport, in collaboration with the national Department of Public Works and Infrastructure, allocated R50 million for the production and installation of concrete barrier units along the border.

An update presented to the Portfolio Committee on Defence and Military Veterans on March 6 revealed significant progress, with over 5 kilometers of the border wall already completed in the uMkhanyakude District Municipality in northern KZN.

The new jersey barriers are strategically placed at locations identified by SANDF soldiers as high-traffic areas for vehicle thieves. This measure is expected to significantly impede the illicit cross-border movement and contribute to the region's overall security and stability. 

Kenya's Progress in Arms Control

Patrick Kenyette

Kenya is on the verge of achieving a significant milestone in arms control, aligning with its commitments to regional and international treaties. The country has made substantial progress in marking official firearms and ammunition, a critical step in combating the illegal arms trade.

The National Police Service has successfully marked 98% of its firearms stock, while the Kenya Defence Forces has marked 70%. This achievement was highlighted by Security Principal Administrative Secretary Wilson Njega, who emphasized the importance of this initiative in preventing the diversion of weapons to criminal elements and ensuring that legitimate weapons transfers are not disrupted.

The marking of firearms is not only a measure to curb illegal trade but also a means to enhance the traceability of weapons. This is crucial in dismantling criminal networks and reducing gun violence, a commitment that Kenya has made through various international agreements, including the Nairobi Protocol and the United Nations Programme of Action on Small Arms.

The Regional Centre on Small Arms (REC-SA) has prescribed this marking exercise to its member states as part of a broader effort to stem the illicit proliferation of small arms and light weapons, thereby promoting peace and security in East and Central Africa.

Kenya's remaining unmarked firearms are attributed to new stocks and areas where the marking exercise has not yet been conducted, such as Wajir and Mandera. Despite these challenges, the progress made thus far is commendable.

Ivor Richard Fung, deputy chief of the Conventional Arms Branch at the U.N. Office for Disarmament Affairs, praised REC-SA member states for their transition from manual to electronic recordkeeping. The deployment




In an April 2023 ceremony, U.S. officials hand over two marking machines to the Kenya Border Police to support firearms marking and record keeping of official stockpiles. REC-SA

of REC-SA's Software Tracing System for electronic records is a testament to the organization's efforts in this domain.

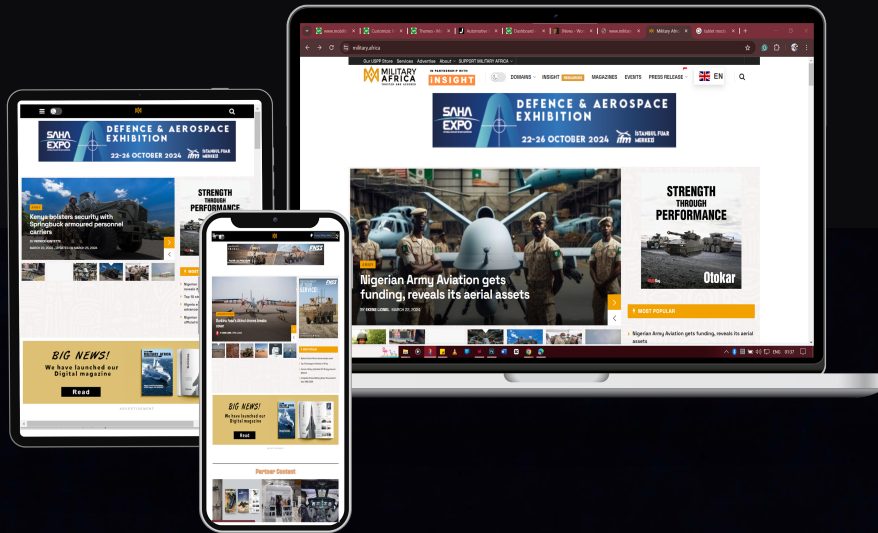
The journey towards complete arms control is ongoing, and while significant strides have been made, there is still work to be done. Kenya's dedication to this cause positions it as a leader among nations striving to ensure a safer world through stringent arms management.

Three years ago, President Uhuru Kenyatta opened the Small Arms Factory in Ruiru, Kiambu County to cater for the country's small arms requirements. The new factory was developed at a cost of Kshs 4 billion and has an annual single-shift manufacturing capacity of 12,000 assault rifles with 60% of components being locally manufactured.

Through the local production of weaponry, Kenya seeks to enhance self-reliance, domestic innovation, and strengthening of local manufacturing capabilities, while offering decent jobs for her youth. 

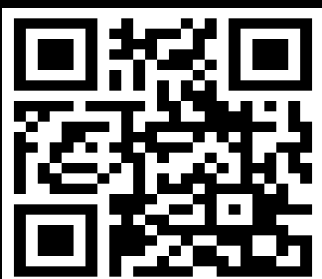


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