

Philippines Eyes India's Akash-1S Missile System to Bolster Air Defense



The Philippines is in talks with India to acquire the battle-tested Akash-1S air defense missile system, a move that would significantly enhance its ability to counter evolving aerial threats. The interest follows the successful performance of the Indian-developed system during a recent conflict between India and Pakistan in May 2025, according to multiple defense sources.

This potential acquisition would build on the Philippines' existing defense partnership with India, highlighted by the 2022 deal for the BrahMos supersonic cruise missile system. The BrahMos missile, with its first deliveries expected by the end of 2025, is intended to boost the Philippines' coastal defense capabilities. The addition of the Akash-1S would create a multi-layered defense network, protecting key military infrastructure and national assets.

The Akash-1S is a medium-range surface-to-air missile (SAM) system developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It is designed to engage a wide range of aerial targets, including fighter jets, drones, and cruise missiles. A key feature is its ability to counter sophisticated guided artillery rockets and short-range ballistic missiles (SRBMs), a capability that was demonstrated during "Operation Sindoor" in May 2025. During the conflict, an Akash-1S unit reportedly intercepted a Pakistani Fatah-1 guided rocket, a difficult target due to its high speed and low flight path.

A single Akash battery includes a Rajendra phased-array radar, which can track up to 64 targets and guide 12 missiles simultaneously. The system's mobility on wheeled platforms allows for rapid deployment, a critical advantage for the geographically dispersed islands of the Philippine

archipelago. With an estimated price of \$200 million per battery, the Akash-1S is viewed as a cost-effective solution to complement the Philippines' existing Israeli-made SPYDER air defense systems.

The Philippines, which refers to its maritime area in the South China Sea as the West Philippine Sea, has been working to modernize its armed forces amid ongoing maritime disputes with China. The acquisition of advanced defense systems like the BrahMos and potentially the Akash-1S from India reflects Manila's strategy to strengthen its deterrence posture and align with like-minded nations to ensure a rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.