

## Rolls-Royce Expresses Strong Interest in Co-Developing Engine for India's CATS Warrior Drone



Rolls-Royce, the renowned British aerospace and defense company, has signaled significant interest in partnering with Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) to co-develop a new engine for India's ambitious Combat Air Teaming System (CATS) Warrior drone. This potential collaboration underscores a growing trend of international defense technology firms seeking deeper partnerships in India's burgeoning indigenous defense sector, aligning with the "Atmanirbhar Bharat" (self-reliant India) initiative.

The CATS Warrior, an autonomous "loyal wingman" unmanned combat aerial vehicle (UCAV), is a key component of India's manned-unmanned teaming (MUM-T) strategy. It is designed to operate alongside manned Indian Air Force (IAF) fighters such as the Tejas, Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA), and Su-30 MKI, enhancing their combat effectiveness while reducing risk to human pilots. A full-scale demonstrator of the CATS Warrior recently completed a successful engine ground run in January 2025, with first flight testing anticipated in late 2025 or early 2026.

Industry sources indicate that while the current CATS Warrior demonstrator utilizes two HAL PTAE-W turbojet engines, the production version, with an increased maximum takeoff weight (MTOW) of 2.1 tons (up from an earlier 1.3 tons), will require significantly more powerful propulsion. Rolls-Royce's proposal aims to address this need by co-developing an advanced engine tailored for the UCAV's operational parameters, including a maximum speed of Mach 0.9 and a combat radius of 350 km. This collaboration could also pave the way for an even more

powerful engine for a planned 3-ton CATS Warrior MkII variant, capable of carrying beyond-visual-range air-to-air missiles.

The proposed partnership goes beyond simple technology transfer, focusing on building end-to-end capabilities that would allow India to own intellectual property rights (IP) for advanced combat engine technologies. This aligns with Rolls-Royce's broader strategy to strengthen its presence in India, with plans to double its supply chain sourcing from the country by 2030. Rolls-Royce already has an established relationship with HAL, including a joint venture, International Aerospace Manufacturing Pvt Ltd (IAMPL), which produces complex aero-engine components for global markets.

This potential co-development with Rolls-Royce represents a crucial step for India's indigenous defense capabilities, ensuring access to cutting-edge engine technology for its advanced UCAV programs. It reflects the growing recognition of India as a significant defense technology partner, rather than merely a market for foreign systems, and is expected to accelerate the development timeline for the CATS Warrior program.