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## India May Equip Su-30MKI Fighters with Russian K-77M Missile to Counter Regional Threats

July 30, 2025

– Categories: Defence & Security



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In light of Russia's successful deployment of the K-77M long-range air-to-air missile on its Su-35S fighter jets, India is reportedly considering the advanced missile for its Su-30MKI fleet. The move is being studied as a countermeasure to the growing air combat capabilities of China and Pakistan, particularly in response to their use of the PL-15 missile.

The K-77M, also known as the R-77M or Izdelie 180, features significant upgrades over earlier variants, including a dual-pulse solid-fuel motor that extends its operational range to around 190 kilometers. It also employs an advanced active electronically scanned array (AESA) radar seeker, enhancing its ability to engage targets even under heavy jamming conditions.

Imagery from recent Russian Air Force operations has confirmed the integration of the K-77M on Su-35S aircraft, indicating that the missile has entered active service. Unlike its predecessors, the K-77M has fixed aerodynamic surfaces rather than lattice fins, which are said to improve its flight performance and stealth compatibility, making it suitable for advanced platforms such as the Su-57.

India's current long-range air-to-air capabilities rely primarily on the older Russian R-77 and R-27 missiles, both of which are increasingly viewed as outdated in comparison to modern Chinese systems. The PL-15 missile, which reportedly has a range exceeding 200 kilometers, is deployed by China's J-20 and J-16 fighters and Pakistan's J-10CE and JF-17 Block III aircraft. The export version of the PL-15, known as the PL-15E, already poses a significant challenge to Indian air superiority.

India is actively developing its indigenous Astra missile program, with the Astra Mk-II currently in testing and the Astra Mk-III still in early development stages. However, these missiles are not expected to enter service in the near future. The potential acquisition of the K-77M could serve as an effective stopgap, providing the Indian Air Force with enhanced engagement range and modern targeting capabilities.

While the Su-30MKI shares design elements with Russian aircraft and is likely to be compatible with the K-77M, integrating the missile would still require system upgrades, testing, and validation. Supply constraints from Russia, driven by its own military needs, and the impact of international sanctions could pose additional hurdles to procurement.

Analysts suggest that adopting the K-77M would bolster India's air combat readiness and provide a critical edge in beyond-visual-range (BVR) engagements while indigenous missile systems continue to develop. The Indian Air Force is yet to confirm any official plans regarding the missile's acquisition.