

Strategic Alignment: India and Brazil's Defense Ties Poised for Growth



India and Brazil are on the verge of significantly deepening their defense cooperation, with negotiations on major military programs taking center stage. This strategic alignment, centered on the Medium Transport Aircraft (MTA) project and India's indigenous Akash missile system, highlights a mutual commitment to strengthening South-South partnerships and diversifying defense sourcing. The discussions are gaining momentum ahead of a planned visit by Brazil's Defense Minister to India in October.

At the core of the bilateral talks is Brazil's Embraer-made C-390 Millennium, a multi-mission military transport aircraft. The Indian Air Force (IAF) is evaluating the C-390 for its MTA program and has issued a Request for Information (RFI) for up to 80 units. This potential contract, which could be worth around \$12 billion, would mark one of Embraer's largest international defense deals. To solidify its presence in the Indian market and align with the "Make in India" initiative, Embraer has established a subsidiary in New Delhi. Furthermore, an MoU with Mahindra Defence Systems last year shows an intent to co-develop and manufacture the C-390 in India, a critical step towards industrial collaboration.

On the other side of the table is India's Akash missile system, a domestically developed medium-range surface-to-air missile. Brazil had previously shortlisted Akash for its Medium/High Altitude Air Defense Artillery System initiative, with China's Sky Dragon 50 as the other contender. However, Brazil recently halted negotiations for the Akash missile, reportedly opting

instead for the Italian EMADS air defense system. Brazilian officials cited budgetary and technical constraints for the delays and decision to seek alternatives, while Indian sources pointed to lobbying from other defense firms. Despite this setback, Brazilian officials maintain that the Akash system remains "technically sound" and is still "in play," though a definitive deal is currently on hold. It is also important to note that Brazil has been negotiating the C-390 and Akash as separate deals.

This evolving defense synergy is not limited to these two projects. India and Brazil are also exploring joint ventures in naval platforms, small arms, and even submarine operations. The growing cooperation reflects a shared view on regional and global issues and a commitment to stability. This is further supported by a recent phone call between Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, where they agreed to enhance cooperation across a range of sectors, including defense, and aim to boost bilateral trade to \$20 billion by 2030. The upcoming visits by high-level Brazilian delegations underscore a strategic realignment that promises a new chapter in the India-Brazil partnership.