

Philippines in Talks with India for Akash Missile System Acquisition



Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr.'s recent state visit to India has brought a new wave of diplomatic and military cooperation into the spotlight. A key focus of the discussions has been the Philippines' potential acquisition of India's indigenously developed Akash-1S air defense missile system. This potential deal, valued at over \$230 million, follows the landmark \$375 million BrahMos supersonic cruise missile agreement, showcasing a rapidly strengthening defense partnership between the two nations.

Marcos' visit to New Delhi, which began on Monday, highlights the Philippines' strategic pivot toward diversifying its defense suppliers. With rising tensions in the South China Sea, Manila is actively seeking to modernize its armed forces and enhance its deterrence capabilities. The Akash-1S is a medium-range surface-to-air missile system developed by India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). It is designed to engage a wide range of aerial threats, including fighter jets, drones, and cruise missiles, with a reported range of up to 45 kilometers and an altitude envelope reaching 20 kilometers.

The system has already demonstrated its effectiveness in a combat environment. During "Operation Sindoor" in May 2025, the Akash-1S successfully intercepted and destroyed a guided rocket from Pakistan, a testament to its advanced indigenous radar seeker and accuracy. For the Philippines, a country with a dispersed archipelagic geography, the Akash-1S's mobility on wheeled and tracked platforms is a particularly attractive feature, allowing for rapid deployment and protection of critical assets across its islands.

This burgeoning defense relationship is not limited to missile systems. The two countries are also expanding their collaboration in other areas of military cooperation. Earlier this week, three Indian naval ships participated in a joint naval exercise with the Philippines in the South China Sea, the first such exercise of its kind. During his visit, Marcos commended India's expanding defense sector, noting that the Philippines' military "needs more" of what India is offering, citing the "quality and affordability" of its systems. This deepening military trust is a strategic move for both nations. For the Philippines, it's about building a robust, layered air defense system. For India, it's a significant step toward becoming a major defense exporter in the Indo-Pacific region, a goal supported by its 'Make in India' initiative. The deal is still in the negotiation phase, with discussions reportedly covering pricing, integration with existing Philippine radar systems, and technology transfer. The successful conclusion of this deal would further cement India's role as a key player in the Southeast Asian defense landscape.