

Rafale deal

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Source: *The Hindu*

Manifest pedagogy: After 8 years of high drama, Rafale has been handed over to India. The political, strategic and technological importance of the Rafale Deal has to be studied in detail. The specifications of Rafale is important for Prelims whereas its procurement process is important for Mains.

In news: Defence minister Rajnath Singh recently received first Rafale fighter.

Placing it in syllabus: Defence developments (explicitly mentioned)

Static Dimensions:

- Timeline of the Rafale deal
- Competitors of Rafale

Current dimensions:

- Importance of the deal
- Specifications of Rafale

Content:

Timeline of the deal:

December 30, 2002: Defence Procurement Procedures (DPP) adopted to streamline procurement.

August 28, 2007: Ministry of Defence issues Request for Proposal for procurement of 126 MMRCA (medium multi-role combat aircraft) fighters.

September 4, 2008: Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance group

incorporates Reliance Aerospace Technologies Ltd (RATL).

May 2011: Air Force shortlists Rafale and Eurofighter jets.

January 30, 2012: Dassault Aviation's Rafale aircraft comes up with the lowest bid.

March 13, 2014: Work Share agreement signed between Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and Dassault Aviation under which they were responsible for 70 per cent and 30 percent of the work, respectively, for 108 aircraft.

January 26, 2016: India and France sign MoU for 36 Rafale aircraft.

November 18, 2016: Government states in Parliament that the cost of each Rafale aircraft to be approximately Rs 670 crore and that all aircraft will be delivered by April 2022.

December 31, 2016: Dassault Aviation's Annual Report reveals the actual price paid for the 36 aircrafts at about Rs 60,000 crore, more than double the government's stated price in Parliament.

March 13, 2018: Public Interest Litigation (PIL) in SC seeks independent probe into Centre's decision to procure 36 Rafale fighter jets and disclosure of the cost.

September 5, 2018: SC agrees to hear PIL seeking stay on Rafale fighter jet deal.

October 10, 2018: SC asks Centre to provide details of the decision making process in the Rafale fighter jet deal in a sealed cover.

November 12, 2018: Centre places price details of 36 Rafale fighter jets in a sealed cover before SC. It also gives details of steps that led to finalisation of the Rafale deal.

November 14, 2018: SC reserves order on pleas seeking court-

monitored probe in Rafale deal.

December 14, 2018: SC says there was no occasion to doubt the decision-making process in the procurement of 36 Rafale fighter jets and dismissed the petitions seeking an investigation into alleged irregularities in the Rs 58,000 crore deal.

January 2019: Former Union ministers Yashwant Sinha and Arun Shourie, advocate Prashant Bhushan, AAP MP Sanjay Singh moves SC seeking review of Rafale verdict.

February 26, 2019: SC decides to hear pleas seeking review of Rafale verdict in open court.

March 6, 2019: Documents related to Rafale deal stolen from Defence Ministry, Centre tells SC.

March 8, 2019: Attorney General clarifies that Rafale documents not stolen, petitioners used photocopies.

April 10, 2019: SC allows use of leaked documents, dismisses Centre's objections claiming privilege.

May 4, 2019: Centre filed reply in SC related to the review petition filed against the SC order of 14 December and submitted all the pricing details related to the Rafale deal to CAG.

May 10, 2019: SC reserved its verdict on review petitions.

Competitors of Rafale:

- Military had to **replace hundreds of obsolete IAF MiG-21, MiG-23 and MiG-27 fighters** that had been steadily retired from service **by the indigenous Tejas fighter.**
- But as the fighter's development got delayed, the then government in **2007, ordered a global tender for 126 medium multi-role combat aircraft,** of which **108 would be built in India** by public sector firm Hindustan

Aeronautics Limited (**HAL**).

- Over the next four years, the IAF flight-tested six fighters:
 - **Boeing's F/A-18 Super Hornet,**
 - **Lockheed Martin's F-16IN Super Viper,**
 - Saab's Gripen C/D,
 - Russian MiG-35,
 - Eurofighter's Typhoon,
 - Rafale.
- In 2011, the Typhoon and the Rafale were found to have met the Indian Air Force (IAF's) performance requirements.
- In January 2012, Dassault's bid was declared lower than Eurofighter' and the Rafale became India's combat aircraft of choice.

Importance of the deal:

- Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, recently received the **first of the 36 Rafale fighter jets** (as part of the Rs 59,000 crore deal signed in 2016) at Dassault Aviation's facility in Merignac.
- **Four of the total 36** aircrafts will be flying over the **Indian skies by May 2020.**
- All 36 jets are expected to arrive in India by September 2022.
- *Apart from Dassault, French companies Thales and Saffron are also involved in the Rafale's production through offset contract.*
- The Rafale is a **twin-jet fighter aircraft** able to **operate from both an aircraft carrier and a shore base.**
- The fighter jet is **armed with potent meteor and scalp missiles.**
- The **meteor is a beyond visual range air-to-air missile**

and **scalp is a long-range cruise missile** that can be launched from the aircraft for deep strikes to hit fixed and stationary targets.

- The **first batch** of Rafale will be stationed in **Ambala**, while the **second batch** will be stationed at **Hasimara in West Bengal** to combat the Chinese threat.
- The induction of Rafale aircraft in the IAF will **increase it's combat capability**.
- Rafale will make **India one of the four countries, besides France, Egypt and Qatar**, to possess the next-gen fighter jet.
- Rafale will **enhance the air strike capabilities** of the IAF and will be used as a **deterrent** against any country.

Specifications of Rafale:

- Rafale can attain a **maximum speed of Mach 1.8/750 kt (2,222.6 km per hour)** and can **climb up to 50,000 ft**.
- Though Rafale can fly up to a range of 3,700 km, it can be **refuelled mid-air**.
- The 15.27 metre long aircraft has **wing length of 10.8 metres each**.
- While Sukhoi 30 MKI can carry ammunition up to 8,000 kg, Rafale can **easily carry bombs up to 9,500 kg**.
- Rafale can carry out all combat aviation missions, including **air defence, close air support, in-depth strikes, reconnaissance, anti-ship strikes and nuclear deterrence**.
- Its **'delta wings'** are extremely stable and have **supersonic speed**.
- Rafale's **cannon can release over 2,500 rounds in one minute**.
- The aircraft's advanced engine is capable of allowing the **throttle to shift from combat to idle power in less than three seconds**.
- It can **jam enemy radars, detect targets anywhere including sea, ground and air**.

- Other superior capabilities include close air support, dynamic targeting, air-to-ground precision strike, anti-ship attack capability and buddy-buddy refuelling.
- The advanced Rafale aircraft **can carry a nuclear weapon, and deploy long range air-to-air missiles, laser-guided bombs** with different warheads and non-guided classic bombs.