

US to sell nine AH-1Z Viper helicopters to Pakistan

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Washington: The US is poised to sell nine AH-1Z Viper attack helicopters worth USD 170 million to Pakistan, weeks after Obama administration decided to provide eight F-16 fighter jets to the country despite strong opposition from some Congressmen and India.

The Pentagon has awarded Bell Helicopter a contract to manufacture and deliver the choppers to Pakistan under its foreign military sales funds.

In a statement, the Defence Department yesterday said the work will be performed in Fort Worth and Amarillo (both in Texas) and is expected to be completed in September 2018.

"Foreign military sales funds in the amount of USD 170,173,188 will be obligated at time of award, none of which will expire at the end of the current fiscal year," the statement said.

The contract, which also includes nine auxiliary fuel kits for Pakistan, is part of the USD 952 million military hardware sale by US which was notified to the Congress last April.

On April 6 last year the State Department had notified to the Congress its decision to sale military hardware worth of USD 950 million to Pakistan.

As per the State Department notification to the Congress, Pakistan has requested a possible sale of 15 AH-1Z Viper Attack Helicopters, 32 T-700 GE 401C Engines (30 installed and 2 spares), and 1000 AGM-114 R Hellfire II Missiles in containers.

It also included 36 H-1 Technical Refresh Mission computers, 17 AN/AAQ-30 Target Sight Systems, 30 629F-23 Ultra High Frequency/Very High Frequency Communication Systems, and 19 H-764 Embedded Global Positioning System/Inertial Navigation Systems.

Other military hardware were 32 Helmet Mounted Display/Optimised Top Owl, 17 APX-117A Identification Friend or Foe, 17 AN/AAR-47 Missile Warning Systems, 17 AN/ALE-47 Countermeasure Dispenser Sets, 18 AN/APR-39C(V)2 Radar Warning Receivers, 15 Joint Mission Planning Systems and 17 M197 20mm Gun Systems.

The total estimated cost is USD 952 million. "This proposed sale of helicopters and weapon systems will provide Pakistan with military capabilities in support of its counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency operations in South Asia," the Defence Security Cooperation Agency had said last year.

Bell AH-1Z Viper is a twin-engine attack helicopter based on the AH-1W SuperCobra, that was developed for the US Marine Corps.

The Obama administration earlier this year approved a USD 700 million sale of eight F-16 fighter jets to Pakistan despite strong opposition from some American lawmakers and India.

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