

Pakistan has one month's time to grab US F16 deal

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Washington: Pakistan has time till May end to avail the American offer to procure eight F-16s at an estimated cost of \$700 million after Obama administration told Islamabad that it should put forward national funds to buy these fighter jets.

The State Department yesterday told reporters that it has told the Pakistani leadership that "they should put forward national funds" for the purchase of F-16s given that key members of the Congress have made clear that they have objections to using foreign military financing - American tax payer's money -- to support.

In the absence of Pakistani taking any tangible action against the Haqqani network, the Senators have said they would not let the Obama Administration use tax payer's money to give F-16s to Pakistan as notified to the Congress on February 11.

Sources here told PTI that the May deadline for Pakistan to respond to the new development from the US is based on "offer validity and (Lockheed's) production process" point of view. Any delay in the acceptance of the offer, would result in increase in cost of F-16s.

However, speaking on condition of anonymity, a senior Pakistani official told PTI that Pakistan is unlikely to buy F-16s at its full price as being told by the United States now.

The US offer of eight F-16s, officials said, might still be there in paper, but it might go in for a long pause and price escalation if Pakistan decides against buying it, sources said.

- PTI