



Defence Professionals News & Analysis

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Defense Business and Industry

Tejas marks 25 years with enhanced capabilities and future advancements.



05-Jan-26

The Indian Air Force (IAF) celebrated the 25th anniversary of the Tejas Light Combat Aircraft (LCA), with significant advancements highlighted by the recent induction of the Tejas Mk1A and ongoing development of the LCA Mk II and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). DRDO Chairman Samir V Kamat emphasized the importance of these next-generation platforms, which incorporate cutting-edge technology and aim to enhance India's self-reliance in defense manufacturing. Air Chief Marshal A P Singh urged the Aeronautical Development Agency to adhere strictly to delivery timelines to maintain the IAF's operational readiness amid evolving security threats. The seminar, 'Aeronautics 2047', showcased the Tejas program's success, having completed over 5,600 flight trials, and underscored the collaborative efforts of more than 100 design and engineering entities that have contributed to the indigenous capabilities of India's defense aviation sector. By focusing on domestic production and advanced technology, India seeks to minimize its dependence on foreign suppliers, aligning with its vision of a developed nation by 2047.

Defence Minister to launch ICG's indigenously built pollution control vessel Samudra Pratap in Goa.



05-Jan-26

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh will commission the Indian Coast Guard's (ICG) first indigenously built Pollution Control Vessel (PCV) Samudra Pratap in Goa on January 5, 2026. This 114.5-meter vessel, constructed with over 60% indigenous content by Goa Shipyard Limited, enhances ICG's operational capabilities in pollution response and maritime safety.

Equipped with advanced technologies, including a Dynamic Positioning capability and state-of-the-art pollution detection systems, Samudra Pratap underscores the government's Aatmanirbhar Bharat and Make in India initiatives. Its commissioning marks a significant advancement in the ICG's fleet, reinforcing India's maritime security and environmental protection efforts.

First AMCA prototype expected by late 2028, with flight in 2029, says DRDO Chief.



05-Jan-26

India's defense sector marks a pivotal advancement as DRDO Chief Dr. Samir V. Kamat announced on January 3-4, 2026, during the Tejas-25 seminar in Bengaluru, that the first Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) prototype will roll out by end-2028, with maiden flight in early 2029. This fifth-generation stealth fighter, led by Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) with HAL and private partners, integrates cutting-edge technologies like internal weapons bays and supercruise, positioning India among elite nations amid China-Pakistan threats. Concurrently, LCA MkII—featuring enhanced stealth and avionics—is slated for first flight in June-July 2026, accelerated from prior estimates due to Tejas lessons. These milestones, backed by Air Chief Marshal Amar Preet Singh's emphasis on timelines, bolster IAF readiness, reduce import reliance, and fortify strategic autonomy by 2035 induction.

DRDO seeks partners for indigenous High Altitude Long Endurance UAV development.



05-Jan-26

India's Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), through its Aeronautical Development Establishment (ADE), issued an Expression of Interest (EoI) on December 24, 2025 (Ref: ADE/MMD/EoI-03/HALE-RPAS/25-26), seeking Indian vendors as Development-cum-Production Partners (DcPP) for a 6-ton class High Altitude Long Endurance

Remotely Piloted Aircraft System (HALE-RPAS). This indigenous UAV, featuring a 25m wingspan, pusher turboprop, 2,000kg payload, and 40,000ft altitude capability, targets ISTAR and strike missions akin to the MQ-9 Reaper. A pre-bid meeting is set for January 9, 2026, with bids closing January 28 and opening January 29 at ADE Bengaluru. From an Indian strategic perspective, the DcPP model accelerates self-reliance under Atmanirbhar Bharat, curtails foreign imports amid LAC tensions with China, enhances border surveillance, and positions India for UAV exports in South Asia.

North Korea conducts hypersonic missile tests to bolster nuclear deterrence.



05-Jan-26

North Korea has announced that leader Kim Jong Un observed the testing of hypersonic missiles, emphasizing the importance of enhancing the nation's nuclear deterrent capabilities. This revelation comes amid increased military activity, including multiple ballistic missile launches reported by South Korea and neighboring countries. The developments raise significant concerns regarding regional security dynamics, particularly as North Korea appears to be intensifying its weapons demonstrations ahead of an important ruling party conference. This escalation could further complicate diplomatic efforts in the region and heighten tensions between North Korea and neighboring states, particularly South Korea and Japan, as they strive to address the growing threat posed by North Korea's advancing military technologies.

Rolls-Royce proposes adaptable engine for India's AMCA jets and naval warships.



05-Jan-26

Rolls-Royce is intensifying its investment in India, proposing to co-develop a high-performance engine for the Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA) and future naval warships, thereby establishing India as its third global "home market." The collaboration aims to enhance India's strategic autonomy by enabling the domestic ownership of essential engine design intellectual property, facilitating independent upgrades and adaptations. Rolls-Royce also highlights the potential for dual-use technology, connecting aerospace and naval sectors to create a viable industrial ecosystem. This partnership not only reinforces India's ambitions in defense but also signifies a strategic shift toward self-reliance in high-

performance engine design and manufacturing across multiple military platforms.

MoD targets 2026 for Dry Kaveri engine certification for Ghatak drone.



05-Jan-26

The Ministry of Defence has set a 2026 target for the certification of the indigenous Dry Kaveri engine, crucial for India's Ghatak Unmanned Combat Aerial Vehicle (UCAV) programme. This timeline aims to align propulsion development with airframe readiness, mitigating delays that have hindered previous aerospace projects. The Dry Kaveri engine, designed to minimize thermal signatures, is expected to enhance the Ghatak's stealth capabilities while allowing it to operate effectively at high altitudes. Successful certification will lead to the prototype's rollout by late 2029, marking a significant step towards achieving strategic autonomy in air combat systems and fostering a robust domestic aerospace ecosystem through public-private collaborations.

IAF Pursues Indigenous Loitering Munitions Following HAROP Success



05-Jan-26

The Indian Air Force (IAF) is accelerating the development of indigenous loitering munitions following successful operations in May 2025 during Operation Sindoor, where Israeli HAROP systems effectively neutralized Pakistani air defenses. This reflects a strategic shift towards enhancing capabilities for Destruction of Enemy Air Defences (DEAD), emphasizing the need for home-grown solutions to mitigate reliance on foreign suppliers. The IAF aims to engage with domestic manufacturers, including Tata Advanced Systems and Solar Industries, to create systems that can autonomously locate and target enemy radar and command nodes. This initiative aligns with India's Atmanirbhar Bharat push, ensuring a robust air superiority strategy and sustained operational dominance in complex battlefield environments.

DRDO to develop BM-04 missile, enhancing India's deterrence capabilities.



05-Jan-26

The Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) has received the Acceptance of Necessity (AoN) to develop the BM-04 Short-Range Ballistic Missile (SRBM), enhancing India's conventional deterrence capabilities. This missile will bridge the gap between tactical rockets like the Pinaka and nuclear-

capable missiles such as the Agni series, with an engagement range of 400 to 1,500 km. Featuring advanced aerodynamic design and a two-stage solid propulsion system, the BM-04 is positioned for rapid deployment and precision strikes against critical enemy infrastructure without crossing the nuclear threshold. This development reflects a strategic shift towards effective non-nuclear retaliation options, bolstering India's Integrated Rocket Force capabilities amidst evolving security challenges.

Geopolitics and Security Alliances

Operation Absolute Resolve: US Captures Maduro—Will Hemisphere Power Shift?



05-Jan-2026

On January 3, 2026, the United States launched Operation Absolute Resolve, a precision military strike that captured Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and First Lady Cilia Flores in Caracas, marking a bold reassertion of American dominance in the Western Hemisphere under President Trump's reinterpretation of the Monroe Doctrine. Rooted in the 2025 National Security Strategy's Trump Corollary, the operation targeted Maduro's regime as a hub for Russian, Chinese, and Iranian influence, narco-terrorism via the Cartel of the Suns, and threats to U.S. energy security through Venezuela's vast oil reserves. Months of preparation began with CIA's Whispering Gale intelligence campaign in August 2025, building a detailed pattern-of-life profile on Maduro using HUMINT, NSA SIGINT, RQ-170 stealth drones, and rehearsals at a full-scale Kentucky mockup of his Fuerte Tiuna compound. Preceding strikes under Operation Southern Spear degraded Venezuelan logistics, positioning 15,000 U.S. troops, the USS Gerald R. Ford carrier group, USS Iwo Jima, Delta Force, 160th SOAR helicopters, F-35s, B-1Bs, and over 150 aircraft in the region. Authorized by Trump at 10:46 PM EST on January 2, the raid unfolded in phases: U.S. Cyber Command blacked out Caracas power grids; EA-18G Growlers jammed S-300 and Buk-M2 radars with NGJ-MB and DRFM tech; F-35s and F-22s fired HARMs to suppress air defenses; MH-60M Black Hawks and MH-47G Chinooks flew low-altitude canyon routes to insert Delta operators at 1:01 AM EST. In a fierce 25-minute ground assault, operators breached reinforced doors with explosives and blowtorches, apprehending the couple before they reached a safe room amid clashes killing 32 Cuban guards and over 80 total. Maduro and Flores were

exfiltrated to the USS Iwo Jima, then routed through Puerto Rico, Guantanamo, and New York for narco-terrorism trials in Brooklyn's Metropolitan Detention Center under Executive Order 14157 and the Alien Enemies Act. Post-operation, strikes damaged Fort Tiuna, La Carlota airbase, Higuero airport, and La Guaira port, with no U.S. fatalities. Trump announced U.S. oversight of Venezuela via a "Petro-Protectorate," led by Secretaries Rubio and Hegseth, to reconstruct PDVSA, exclude adversaries, curb migration, and reimburse intervention costs through oil contracts. The mission exposed Russian IADS vulnerabilities, normalized "kinetic law enforcement" for regime change, eroded sovereignty norms, and risks insurgency or Cuban retaliation, reshaping hemispheric power dynamics through integrated cyber-air-special ops warfare.

US Operation Absolute Resolve Causes Major Damage to Caracas Military Base



05-Jan-26

On January 3, 2026, the United States successfully executed Operation Absolute Resolve, a meticulously coordinated military operation aimed at capturing Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, from a heavily fortified compound in Caracas. The operation involved over 150 aircraft, including F-22s, F-35s, and B-2 bombers, alongside elite Delta Force commandos, and was supported by extensive intelligence from US spy agencies, which tracked Maduro's movements and communications for months. The raid utilized cyber operations to disable Venezuelan air defenses, followed by precise airstrikes that neutralized military infrastructure, enabling the special forces to apprehend the targets with minimal resistance and no US casualties. This operation not only underscores the effectiveness of US military capabilities and intelligence integration in regime disruption but also highlights the implications for global geopolitics, particularly for countries like India, which may need to recalibrate their defense strategies in response to shifting power dynamics and the potential stabilization of resource-rich regions like Venezuela, affecting global energy markets.

Indian Army Chief visits UAE to strengthen defense cooperation and ties.



05-Jan-26

Indian Army Chief General Upendra Dwivedi has commenced a two-day official visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) aimed at enhancing bilateral military

and strategic cooperation. This visit reinforces the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership between India and the UAE, focusing on defense collaboration, joint exercises, and capability building. General Dwivedi's discussions with senior UAE military officials will address innovations in defense and the integration of modern operational techniques. Following recent military engagements, including the upcoming joint Exercise Desert Cyclone-II, this visit signifies India's commitment to strengthening military diplomacy in the Gulf region and responding to shared security challenges, further solidifying ties with a key strategic partner in a complex global environment.

India expresses concern and supports Venezuela amid US actions against Maduro.



05-Jan-26

India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has expressed deep concern over the recent military operation by the United States that led to the capture of Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro and his wife. The MEA reaffirmed its support for the people of Venezuela, emphasizing the importance of dialogue and peaceful resolution to ensure regional stability. Following the developments, the MEA advised Indian nationals in Venezuela to avoid non-essential travel and to exercise extreme caution, given the increased political uncertainty and the declaration of a national emergency in the country. The situation has garnered criticism from global powers like Russia and China, who condemned the U.S. action, which President Trump described as a necessary measure to protect American interests. As the geopolitical landscape shifts, India's response highlights its commitment to fostering diplomatic relations and protecting its citizens abroad amidst escalating international tensions.

US intervention in Venezuela raises regional tensions, prompting Indian concerns.



05-Jan-26

On January 3, 2026, US forces conducted Operation Absolute Resolve, executing airstrikes in Venezuela, capturing President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, and sparking regional tensions. The Indian Ministry of External Affairs expressed profound concern, emphasizing the need for peaceful dialogue to ensure the safety of all Venezuelans, including its own citizens. This unilateral intervention raises questions about international norms and could affect global energy security, especially given Venezuela's substantial oil

reserves that are crucial for India's energy imports. The situation underscores the importance of a multipolar approach to prevent broader geopolitical ramifications in Latin America.

China and Pakistan enhance cooperation in trade, finance, and security.



05-Jan-26

China and Pakistan have committed to enhancing their cooperation in various sectors, including industry, agriculture, and mining, as well as expanding collaboration in trade, investment, information technology, and cybersecurity, according to a joint statement from Chinese state media. They also emphasized the need for closer ties in financial and banking sectors, supporting each other on regional and international financial platforms. Notably, both nations called for tangible actions to dismantle terrorist organizations based in Afghanistan, underscoring their shared security concerns. This strengthened partnership poses strategic implications for regional stability, particularly in relation to India's security dynamics and its response to increasing Sino-Pakistani collaboration.

Trump asserts Ukraine didn't target Putin's residence in drone strike.



05-Jan-26

President Donald Trump clarified that U.S. national security officials have determined Ukraine did not target Russian President Vladimir Putin's residence in a recent drone strike, disputing the Kremlin's claims. This assertion comes amidst ongoing peace negotiations, with both Trump and Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy engaging in discussions over a proposed 20-point peace plan. Trump's initial concern over the Russian accusation has shifted, as he now questions its credibility and highlights the importance of advancing diplomatic efforts to resolve the conflict. The broader significance lies in the evolving dynamics of U.S.-Russia relations and the challenges faced in achieving lasting peace in Ukraine, particularly given Russia's stated objectives in the region.

Jaishankar embarks on 6-day trip to France, Luxembourg for key talks.



05-Jan-26

External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar embarked on a six-day official visit to France and Luxembourg from January 4 to 9, 2026, to bolster India's strategic partnerships with these key European nations. In Paris, he will meet French leadership, including Foreign

Minister Jean-Noel Barrot, to review progress under the India-France Strategic Partnership—spanning defence, trade, clean energy, cybersecurity, and counterterrorism—and discuss global issues ahead of French President Emmanuel Macron's anticipated trip to India for the AI Summit. Jaishankar will also address the 31st French Ambassadors' Conference as Guest of Honour, while in Luxembourg, he is set to hold talks with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Xavier Bettel, engage senior leaders, and connect with the Indian community, reinforcing ties established since 1948. This outreach highlights India's proactive diplomacy in Europe amid dynamic global challenges.

Trump lists welfare-receiving nations; India notably absent, highlighting Indian Americans' success. SHARE

05-Jan-26

US President Donald Trump on January 4, 2026, shared a chart on Truth Social titled "Immigrant Welfare Recipient Rates by Country of Origin," listing welfare assistance rates for immigrant households from about 120 countries, notably excluding India while including neighbors like Bangladesh at 54.8%, Pakistan at 40.2%, Nepal at 34.8%, and China at 32.9%. This omission underscores the economic prowess of Indian immigrants, who boast a median household income of USD 151,200 in 2023—surpassing the USD 105,600 average for Asian-headed households—with immigrant-led Indian households reaching USD 156,000, well above US-born Indian households at USD 120,200. From an Indian perspective, the data affirms the global success and self-reliance of the Indian diaspora, bolstering India's stature amid thriving contributions to the US economy.

Military Operations

Punjab man's remains returned after dying in Russia-Ukraine war. SHARE

05-Jan-26

The mortal remains of 28-year-old Mandeep Kumar from Goraya, Jalandhar district, Punjab, who died in November 2025 during a drone attack while coerced into fighting for the Russian army in the Russia-Ukraine war, reached his hometown on January 3, 2026, after over 22 months. Duped by Kapurthala-based travel agents promising a job in Italy, Mandeep traveled via Armenia in August 2023, endured beatings and starvation in Russia, and contacted his family on March 3, 2024, expressing fears after forced enlistment

despite a congenital leg defect. His brother Jagdeep's persistent efforts—two trips to Russia, DNA submissions confirmed in November 2025 via Indian Embassy assistance from Rostov-on-Don—facilitated repatriation, amid family demands for Punjab Police action against agents exploiting youth amid ongoing recruitments of Indians into conflict zones.

Terrorism and Counterterrorism

Cuba mourns 32 officers killed in US raid during Venezuela operation. SHARE

05-Jan-26

On January 4, 2026, Cuba reported the deaths of 32 military and police officers during a US military operation in Venezuela aimed at capturing President Nicolás Maduro on narco-terrorism charges. The Cuban forces had been deployed at Venezuela's request to assist with security missions and faced direct combat and bombings, prompting Cuba to declare two days of national mourning. This incident highlights Cuba's increasing military involvement in Latin American regimes, raising concerns about regional stability amid US counter-terrorism efforts. The situation invites scrutiny regarding the implications of extraterritorial military operations and their alignment with broader democratic interests in the region.

Cybersecurity and Information Warfare

Cyber Espionage Campaign Targets Indian Government and Universities Uncovered. SHARE

05-Jan-26

Cybersecurity firm Cyfirma uncovered on December 23, 2025, a sophisticated cyber espionage operation by Pakistan-aligned APT36 (Transparent Tribe), targeting Indian government entities, defense sectors, universities, and strategic institutions through spear-phishing emails with ZIP archives containing malicious LNK files disguised as PDFs like "Online JLPT Exam Dec 2025.pdf.lnk," first observed on December 15. These trigger mshta.exe to execute fileless HTA loaders decrypting ReadOnly and WriteOnly payloads—a RAT enabling remote control, screenshots, clipboard monitoring for credential and cryptocurrency theft, data exfiltration via AES-encrypted C2 to 2.56.10.86:8621, and antivirus-adaptive persistence. This persistent threat, active since 2013, underscores the urgent need

for India's institutions to bolster defenses against such cross-border intrusions aimed at stealing classified intelligence.

Miscellaneous

Trump Claims U.S. Control Over Venezuela After Maduro's Capture

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05-Jan-26

President Donald Trump announced that the United States will take control of Venezuela following the capture of President Nicolás Maduro during a large-scale military operation in Caracas. The U.S. aims to oversee a transition to stabilize the nation while rebuilding its oil sector, which has suffered from years of economic mismanagement. Trump emphasized the need for a continued American presence in Venezuela, focusing on energy interests, and indicated readiness for further military action if necessary to eliminate remnants of the Maduro regime. This intervention raises significant implications for global energy markets and regional stability, particularly from an Indian perspective, as it may influence crude oil supplies, pricing stability, and norms regarding extra-regional military interventions justified under the guise of counter-narcotics and democratization efforts. India's strategic analysis will likely consider the long-term impacts on its energy security and supply diversification in light of U.S. control over a major oil-producing nation.

INSV Kaundinya completes one-third voyage, honors India's maritime heritage.

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05-Jan-26

The Indian Navy's INSV Kaundinya has successfully completed one-third of its maiden voyage from Porbandar to Muscat, Oman, employing an ancient stitched-ship technique that emphasizes India's maritime heritage. As it sails through the high seas, the vessel relies solely on wind and sails, honoring traditional shipbuilding practices dating back to the fifth century. Prime Minister Narendra Modi commended the

efforts of the designers and the Indian Navy, highlighting the journey as a significant step in reviving India's historical maritime connections with the Gulf and Southeast Asia. This expedition not only celebrates India's rich maritime traditions but also retraces vital trade routes once used by Indian sailors for commerce and cultural exchange.

US control of Venezuelan oil could free \$1 billion for India.

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05-Jan-26

A potential US-led restructuring of Venezuela's oil sector could significantly benefit India, unlocking approximately \$1 billion in long-pending dues tied to ONGC Videsh Ltd's operations in the sanctions-hit nation. With the easing of sanctions, Indian firms could revive production in fields like San Cristobal, which has seen output plummet due to US restrictions. This scenario not only provides India with a strategic alternative to Middle Eastern crude but also reduces its exposure to geopolitical risks while strengthening its negotiating position in global oil markets. Furthermore, a US-controlled Venezuelan oil sector may diminish China's current leverage over Venezuelan crude, paving the way for India to secure long-term supply contracts.

Balochistan's humanitarian crisis worsens with rising enforced disappearances and violence in 2025.

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05-Jan-26

Balochistan is grappling with a severe humanitarian crisis marked by a rise in enforced disappearances, particularly targeting women and political activists, amidst escalating state repression in 2025. Reports indicate that over 10 women have gone missing, while families of the disappeared have resorted to protests along the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) to demand justice. The region has also witnessed a significant uptick in violence, with 443 fatalities among civilians and security forces due to bombings and targeted attacks. These worsening conditions highlight the ongoing struggle against state repression and the dire need for attention to human rights violations in Balochistan as political unrest continues to escalate.

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