

# Boeing's rise in India



*Boeing P-8I of the Indian Navy*

**B**oeing, a global designer and manufacturer of aircraft, spacecraft and weapon systems, has been actively advancing its business activities in the Indian subcontinent. With over 160,000 employees, the US multinational aerospace giant is the second-largest manufacturer of military airplanes and arms, it offers a wide range of airborne systems including missiles, fighter jets, attack helicopters, heavy military transport aircraft and helicopters to defence forces globally. With a diversified line-up of its cutting-edge systems, Boeing has been consistently speeding up the mission readiness and modernisation of the Indian Armed Forces in the 21st century.

After Russia, American defence corporations have now emerged as the leading weapon suppliers to the Indian military, and with more than \$15 billion sales, Boeing is the largest US exporter of military hardware to India. Boeing continues its very long partnership with the Indian military, since the 1940s, supplying services, warplanes and weapon solutions. About 75 years ago, the fledgling Indian Air Force enrolled two Boeing warplanes, the T-6G Harvard advanced trainer and the C-47 Skytrain (Dakota DC-3) military transport aircraft, into its young fleet. Inducted in 1946, the second world war-era Dakota DC-3 (Parashuram in IAF) had played an indispensable role as the key airlift workhorse during the major

post-independence conflicts including the 1965 and 1971 wars. This quintessential Boeing transporter had been the backbone of the IAF cargo fleet for forty long years. However, a refurbished version of Dakota DC-3 of IAF flew recently for the 1st time during Aero India at Yelahanka, Bengaluru.

Even today, Boeing plays a key role in the fleet modernisation of Indian armed forces. Leading cutting edge US military warplanes, such as C-17 Globemaster III, CH-47F Chinook, Poseidon P-8 long-range maritime reconnaissance aircraft (LRMRA) and AH-64E Apache Guardians have already been flying in the Indian colours. The company has supplied nearly tens of billions of dollars worth of military airplanes and hardware to Indian Air Force and the Navy in a single decade, from 2011 to 2020.

The eleven massive Boeing-supplied C-17 Globemaster III heavy-lift cargo planes are the much-needed boost to tactical and strategic airlift missions of the Indian Air Force. In 2011, New Delhi sealed a \$4.7B pact with the US to acquire 10 Boeing-made C-17 airplanes, while Boeing delivered one more aircraft (which is the world's last Globemaster) under a separate contract signed in 2016. Deployed with No. 81 Sky Lords squadron, these giant Boeing's cargo planes are significant force multipliers for the country and are deployed extensively by the IAF for a wide range of military and emergency operations entailing

troop transport, combat airlift, emergency humanitarian aid (food and medical supplies), and disaster relief. Similarly, the newly acquired fifteen tandem-rotor Boeing CH-47 Chinooks have also boosted the mission readiness of IAF's transport fleet. In the absence of IAF's Mi-26s fleet that is now grounded and needs a major overhaul to resume flying operations, the Air Force's 126 helicopter Flight (the Featherweights) squadron equipped with new CH-47 Chinook heavy-lift helicopters is actively taking part in all the crucial Indian military operations and disaster relief, they have been playing a major role in Ladakh amid border tensions with Chinese People's Liberation Army. Moreover, their deployment for life-saving operations in Uttarakhand during the recent 'Glacier Burst Disaster' was extremely significant.

Further, Boeing has also completed deliveries of 22 advanced-generation AH-64E Apache Guardians to IAF along with 15 Chinooks (I) under the same \$3 billion contract sealed in 2015. Packed with unique Longbow MMW fire control radar, AIM-92 Stinger anti-air and AGM-114 Hellfire anti-surface munitions, these Boeing-made gunships are the most deadly attack helicopters globally. In absence of suitable options for high-altitude scouting and warfare, the Air Force has deployed some of its Guardian gunships fitted with Longbow FCR in Ladakh amid the deadlock situation