

Interview with IAF's No. 44 Squadron

VAYU: *What are the current mission roles of the Il-76 aircraft in 44 Squadron – strategic airlift, humanitarian aid or combat logistics?*

The current mission roles of Il-76 aircraft are air logistics support, air transportation, para drop of men and material, Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR) missions, ex-India tasks and participation in international exercises. Various operations by Sqn in the past including the recent Op Sindoor are a testament to the Sqn's operational capability.

VAYU: *How has the Il-76's performance adapted to India's high altitude and border specific operational needs, especially in Ladakh and the Northeast?*

Il-76 has proven to be a vital asset for IAF particularly in addressing the unique op challenges of high altitude such as Leh and Thoise. The four turbojet engines and rugged landing gear make Il-76 well suited for operations from high altitude airfields, where thinner air, shorter runway and rising terrain challenge many other aircraft. With good payload capacity, aircraft

is capable of carrying large amount of cargo and troops. Various weapon systems can also be carried in Il-76 over large distances.

VAYU: *What types of payloads and configurations can the Il-76 accommodate, and how quickly can it be reconfigured for various mission types?*

Il-76 is a Soviet era strategic airlifter designed for heavy cargo transport. It is widely used by military and civilian operators across the world. The general overview



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of its configuration capabilities are as follows: Cargo Transport—This role includes carriage of vehicles, heavy loads, disaster relief materials etc; Troop Transfer—The aircraft in this role can carry a large number of passengers; Paratroopers Deployment—In this configuration, the aircraft can carry a large number of combat ready paratroopers; Medical Evacuation—In this role the aircraft can carry a large number of stretchers with medical staff.

VAYU: *Can you describe a landmark operation or mission in 44 Squadron's history where the Il-76 played a decisive role?*

Op Cactus (1988) was a landmark operation in 44 Sqn's history. It demonstrated