
Obama Increases Pressure on Brazil to Get Boeing's F-18 Fighter Planes

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The United States is still very interested in selling 36 F-18 fighter planes to the Brazilian Air Force and the Obama administration seems to be increasing the pressure to get the deal and win the competition with France and Sweden.

The latest message from the US, according to Brazilian daily O Estado de S. Paulo, is that such a sale would be very good to bring US and Brazil closer and well as to turn the strategic relation between the two countries into a deeper and more dynamic tie.

Ellen Tauscher, state under secretary for Arms Control and International Security, who works very closely with state secretary Hillary Clinton and was in Brazil to deliver a letter from her, told o Estado: "This is a great opportunity for deepening our relationship with Brazil... The most important in this agreement is our relationship with the Brazilian people and the Brazilian government."

She didn't show any modesty when praising the American product, made by Boeing and comparing it to the French competition, the Rafale, manufactured by Dassault. "We are not confused over what we are offering: we still have the best plane, the world's biggest aerospace company and we are still the United States of America. We believe that, in the end, these are the parameters."

Starting from the very top everybody in the Obama administration is personally committed to this deal: the president himself, Defense secretary Robert Gates and the secretary of state. Tauscher seems to have only Brazil's interest in mind when she says, "Frankly, it would be a shame if Brazil doesn't get the best plane and the best opportunity."

Why should Brazil buy the Boeing fighters? Because they are the best, they have the best technology and Brazil will get technological transfer, she says.

Can the US be trusted? Brazil had some bad experience in terms of technology transfer. American vetoed the deal when the Brazilian government tried to sell Super Tucano military planes to Venezuela just four years ago. Washington argued then that the aircraft had sensitive American technology.

This will not happen again Tauscher guarantees: "This is a new government and a new sale. We assure the transfer. This is an unprecedented offer of transfer of technology."

And what does unprecedented mean? Tauscher explains: "The deal includes a bigger transference than it was contemplated originally. Boeing is the world's biggest aerospace company, there is opportunity for generating jobs well

beyond the production of these 36 jets."

Is there a chance the US Congress might interfere to prevent the technology transfer? "They cannot interfere. The American Congress would have to pass a law to block the technology transfer and since the Executive wishes to deepen the relationship with Brazil, this is not going to happen."

And how the US would react if they lost the competition? They would be disappointed of course, but the under secretary adds: "We will still be friends."