
Brazil to Buy Dozens of Fighter Jets to Defend Amazon and Offshore Oil

Contributed by Newsroom
Saturday, 05 July 2008

The Brazilian government launched the process to buy at least 36 fighter jets as part of a broader plan to modernize its Air Force and in keeping with neighbors like Venezuela, Chile and Peru, which are also in the process of overhauling their fleets.

According to Brasília sources, Brazil wants to buy and build equipment to defend offshore oil assets and the porous Amazon border threatened by armed drug-traffickers, smugglers and foreign guerrillas.

In February, Colombia ordered 24 Kfir bomber jets from Israel, while Venezuela acquired Russian Sukhoi jets and last month revealed it is considering buying more. Chile bought new Boeing F-16s and Peru decided to upgrade its jets. Argentina has also announced plans to upgrade its air force.

Upon taking office in January 2003, President Lula da Silva scrapped plans to replace aging Mirage jets, saying he would use the money to feed the poor.

Now, the Air Force wants a multi-role fighter to replace its entire fleet of fighter jets over the next 15 years. That could increase the size of the order to more than 100 aircraft.

Six manufacturers figure in the possible list of procurement from which the Brazilian Air Force requested information according to the service press department. They are Boeing's F-18 Super Hornet; Lockheed Martin's F-35 Lightning II; Dassault's Rafale; Sukhoi's SU-35, Saab's Gripen and Eurofighter's Typhoon.

Brazil is seeking a generous technology transfer package, possibly including local assembly, to help develop its own aviation industry and perform maintenance of the aircraft.

Brazil has been leading an effort to create a South American Defense Council to help coordinate arms purchases. Though many of its neighbors have recently renewed their fleets, some manufactures still see Brazil as a possible regional defense hub.

Mercopress