



Consortium of Indo-Pacific
Researchers

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Greetings Colleagues,

The Consortium is pleased to share its latest newsletter for the Indo-Pacific. Press reply button for your feedback and comments.

U.S. Approves MQ-9B Drones Deal to India



Figure 1: MQ-9B Sky Guardian /IMAGE/ General Atomics Aeronautical

The U.S. State Department has [approved](#) a \$ 3.99 billion deal for SkyGuardian predator drones. The deal includes 31 SkyGuardian drones, 170 Hellfire missiles, 310 small-diameter bombs, and related support material. The deal was announced at the time of Indian Prime Minister Modi's visit to Washington in June 2023. The approval of a hi-tech and sophisticated drone technology deal between the U.S. and India marks a significant milestone in the ongoing efforts to strengthen their defense and security ties.

The MQ-9B unmanned aircraft system provides a wide range of capabilities for [intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance](#) (ISR) purposes. It is designed to operate in various environments, including land, sea, and air, making it a versatile multi-domain capability for a range of operations.

On the approval of the deal, Senator Ben Cardin, the Chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, [said](#), “The U.S.-India partnership plays a key role in Indo-Pacific stability, including through regional mechanisms such as the Quad.” In addition, the Defense & Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) [said](#), “This proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by helping to strengthen the U.S.-Indian strategic relationship and to improve the security of a major defense partner which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region.

Furthermore, the [State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller](#) [said](#), "aircraft will provide India with an enhanced maritime security and maritime domain awareness capability. It offers India outright ownership and a 16-fold increase in the number of aircraft, as compared to their current lease of two MQ-9A aircraft." In a media query, he further elaborated that the U.S.-India partnership is one of the "most consequential relationships. We work closely with India on our most vital priorities."

Indeed, the deal would enable India's armed forces to enhance their intelligence and surveillance capabilities for more effective operations. This deal is of paramount importance given the ongoing tension with China at the Himalayan border since the Galwan face-off in 2020. Also, China's increasing “sphere of influence” in the Indian Ocean has become a concern for India's security. It is worth mentioning that in a recent development in the Indian Ocean region, Maldives has [allowed](#) a Chinese "research and survey" ship, Xiang Yang Hong 3, to dock at its port, and it raises concern for India.

The partnership between the U.S. and India is aimed at promoting regional stability and countering common security threats. The approval of this deal underscores the growing strategic partnership between the US and India and highlights their shared commitment to maintaining peace and security in the Indo-Pacific region.

EU-Indo Pacific Ministerial Forum Meetup in Brussels

European Union (EU) Ministers of Foreign Affairs and their Indo-Pacific counterparts from the East coast of Africa in the West to the Pacific islands in the East [met](#) in Brussels, Belgium, on Feb.2,2024, to discuss challenges and opportunities for shared prosperity, green transition, and security. Alongside the EU-ASEAN Ministerial meeting was also held. The meeting was attended by the foreign ministers representing ASEAN and EU member states, the ASEAN Secretariat, the European Commission, and Timor-Leste as an ASEAN observer. The joint statement stated, “We noted that both the ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP) and the EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific share relevant fundamental principles in promoting an open, inclusive, transparent and rules-based regional architecture in the Indo-Pacific region, in which ASEAN is central.” [Read More](#)

U.S.-Japan Conducts Joint Exercise

The U.S. military and Japan Self Defense Forces (JSDF) began conducting a joint command post exercise Keen Edge 2024. This exercise is designed to increase our integrated joint operational capability, refine command and control procedures, and enhance interoperability of all participants. [Read More](#)

U.S. Top Security Officials Warns on Cyberthreats

The Commander of U.S. Cyber Command [cautions](#) about cybersecurity vulnerabilities and emphasizes decisive action in response. Furthermore, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Christopher Wray told Congress, “There has been far too little public focus on the fact that PRC hackers are targeting our critical infrastructure.” [Read More](#)

Indo-Pacific Quiz

Which South Asian country celebrates its National Day on Feb 4th?

- a. Maldives b. Bhutan

c. Nepal

d. Sri Lanka

When did the military coup take place in Myanmar?

a. Feb 1st, 2021.

b. Feb 1st, 2020.

c. Feb 3rd, 2021.

d. Feb 3rd, 2022.

Consortium Highlights

- ❖ **Opinion Piece:** India Needs a 'Sphere of Influence' Policy in South Asia, By: Prof. Rajat Ganguly, Murdoch University, Perth, Australia. [Read Here](#)
- ❖ CIPR Welcomes interns *Changyu Hou* and *Yoojung Kwon* from Korea University, Seoul.

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