

# Sukhoi to Open \$100M Service Center in Malaysia

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The Su-30MK, pictured here, is in the running to be chosen in a tender by the Malaysian Defense Ministry.

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The Sukhoi corporation signed a \$100 million contract with Kuala Lumpur to service to the country's fleet of its jets, in an effort to leverage its presence on the eve of a tender to supply additional combat planes to the Malaysian military.

The contract, signed by Sukhoi with the Malaysian Defense Ministry, is intended to provide service and technical assistance for 18 Su-30MKM jets, RIA-Novosti reported Thursday, citing a spokesman of the LIMA 2013 aerospace and maritime exhibition, which is taking place in the Southeast Asian nation.

Malaysia purchased the planes from Russia for \$910 million in 2003. President Vladimir Putin visited Kuala Lumpur, the country's capital, to ink the deal.

The decision on a new purchase of 18 planes, which are expected to replace MiG-29 aircraft acquired earlier, is to be announced by the end of April, after the outcome of national elections.

Sukhoi's was short-listed by the Malaysian government along with the British-backed Eurofighter, Sweden's SAAB, France's Dassault Aviation and America's Boeing, Malaysian Defense Minister Zahid Hamidi told Reuters on Thursday.

Experts say that Boeing and Sukhoi have the best chances in the tender, since their planes have already proven themselves in the local armed forces.

Alexander Klementyev, the local representative of Sukhoi parent company United Aviation Corporation, said earlier that the service center is the "main Russian advantage" for the tender.

Alexander Perendzhiyev, an expert from the Association of Military Analysts said the idea to establish a service center in Malaysia followed a global trend by weapons manufacturers. "Everyone understands that just selling arms is not effective anymore, and service centers increase the attractiveness of Russian weapons."

Sales of Russian planes to Malaysia started in 1994 with a purchase of 18 MiG-29 jets. The deal was heavily criticized in the Russian media at the time, since half of the contract was paid for with palm oil.

Malaysia, Indonesia and Vietnam are among the leading buyers of Russian military planes. Deputy director for Rosoboronexport Viktor Komardin said Thursday that a service center for Su-30s, as well as Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters, will be opened in Indonesia, RIA-Novosti reported Thursday.

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