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## India mulls to repair grounded Afghan Air Force planes with \$50m budget

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The Indian government is mulling to repair the grounded Afghan Air Force planes as efforts are underway to further boost the capabilities of the Afghan forces who are in critical need of air power.

A technical team was reportedly sent to Afghanistan last year to review the needs of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces with the officials saying the delegation also inspected the grounded planes, including 11 Mi-35 gunships and seven transport planes.

The Indian Ambassador to Afghanistan Manpreet Vohra told Reuters “We have been looking at the scale of the challenge the ANSF (Afghan National Security Forces) faces, particularly in one segment, close air support.”

“We are trying to see how we can help. They have a large number of attack helicopters and transport aircraft grounded for want of spares, for expiry of certification,” he added.

A decision is expected to be taken in this regard within the next few months, the officials have said.

This comes as the United States also works on plans to replace the transport helicopters being used by the Afghan Air Force with the modern UH-60 Blackhawk helicopters.

In his statement before the Senate Armed Services Committee, Gen. Votel informed regarding the significant capability gaps in Afghan Air Force, saying “The current rotary wing fleet consisting primarily of the Russian-made Mi-17 is both undersized and proving to be more expensive and difficult to sustain than originally envisioned and is experiencing a higher than expected attrition rate.”

He said “The DoD-request of \$814.5M for FY17 for the first year of our plan to recapitalize the Afghan fleet provides funding to procure 53 UH-60s, with refurbishment and modification of the first 18; 30 additional armed MD-530F helicopters; 6 additional A-29 attack aircraft; and five AC-208s. The requested FY2017 Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) budget, including the 23 additional funds for the first year of this proposed aviation initiative, went to Congress on 10 Nov 2016.”