

Israel Set to Win Big Indian Orders for Assault Rifles

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New Delhi/ Malanpur. Israel has initiated a smart step towards winning huge orders for the Indian Army's basic assault rifle and small arms by forming a joint venture with India's Punj Lloyd industrial house.

Tavor, made by Israel Weapon Industries (IWI), is already the weapon of choice for the Indian Army for its specialized units, and as the Army is seeking to replace its existing stock of indigenous INSAS 5.56mm rifles with a lighter and more powerful weapon, different variants of Tavor stand a good chance of being the standard weapon for the Indian soldier in the years to come.

As per the new defence acquisition rules under Defence Procurement Procedure (DPP) 2016, all major weapon purchases have to come with Transfer of Technology and gradual Make in India projects. By signing the agreement with Punj Lloyd, even without a confirmed large order, IWI has apparently placed itself ahead of three or four other competitors in the selection process.

IWI and Punj Lloyd have formed the Punj Lloyd Raksha Systems (PLR), whose first production facility was inaugurated on May 4 at Malanpur in the central Indian state of Madhya Pradesh by Chief Minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan. Madhya Pradesh already has a chunk of the Indian defence industry, albeit in the public sector, and Mr Chouhan promised all possible assistance to the private sector also in expanding the defence industrial base in the state.



IWI has 49 percent share, and Punj Lloyd, the majority 51percent. Notably, this is India's first small arms manufacturing venture in the private sector. Notably, this is India's first small arms manufacturing venture in the

private sector, and sets the stage for Israel to capture the small arms market for the Indian forces, company officials told [India Strategic](#).

Present on the occasion were Minister of Rural Development, Panchayati Raj, Drinking Water & Sanitation Narendra Singh Tomar, senior military and police officials, Israel's Ambassador in New Delhi Daniel Carmon.



But a highly significant presence on the occasion was that of Mr Michel Ben-Baruch, Head of SIBAT, the International Defence Cooperation Directorate of the Israeli Ministry of Defence. He observed: "Israel's Ministry of Defense fully and wholeheartedly supports this cooperation and will continue to support the transfer of technology and information also in the future, for the betterment of improved advanced tools. Israel and India consider their defense industry cooperation as a monumental step forward, towards a future of immense potential."

At a later stage, PLR is also likely to manufacture X95 carbine, Galil sniper rifle, and Negev Light Machine Gun (LG).

Defence and Aerospace Million) to make components there are orders from the will be made. Initially, PLR except the barrel, and the integration and testing, and Mr Samy Katsav, Chairman of IWI, observed on the of the PLR venture, and also of its production, not only will find their way in the



Punj Lloyd Chairman Atul Punj said on the occasion that his group had already invested about Rs 350 crore (USD 55 Million) in the Business, and around Rs. 25 crore (USD 4 of the Tavor variants, and that as and when Indian Government, appropriate expansions will make various components of the Tavor entire production will be exported to IWI for then for its global sales, including to India.

of the SK Group which is the parent company occasion that Israel will be the first customer held the hope that as IWI exports 90 percent components but weapons fully made in India global market through the company's network.



Army to announce weapon selection within weeks

Punj Lloyd President for Manufacturing Business Ashok Wadhawan told [India Strategic](#) that the Indian Army has announced a requirement for about 160,000 assault rifles, and the PLR joint venture was a step ahead to win that order. It has to be kept in mind that the Indian armed forces and paramilitary organizations are already using Tavor variants, and accordingly, accustomed to them. "It should be the logical standard weapon."

A decision nonetheless on the choice is likely to be announced by the Indian Ministry of Defence in the coming few weeks.



Army reverts to 7.62 mm bore for small arms

Significantly, the Indian Army has reportedly also decided to go back to the lethal power of the 7.62mm bore instead of the 5.56mm it had opted for earlier, and PLR has offered to make it in both the bores in accordance with the requirements of the Army and paramilitary forces, which also use this weapon. An India-made Tavor rifle, or other small arms made by PLR, would be able to fire both the 7.62 and 5.56 bore ammunitions with few modifications, Mr Wadhawan said.

The number of new rifles with the Army is already inadequate, and once the small arms like Tavor and its variants are made indigenously, the requirement to replace and refresh the inventory can be met rather fast, without and time-consuming tendering process.

As per the existing rules, follow on orders for any equipment do not require fresh tenders, but just repeat orders to an existing supplier.

Asked about the raw materials like steel, Mr Wadhawan said that everything would be sourced from within the country and that the quality of the steel from India had already been tested and approved by IWI. As for the barrels, they would continue to be made in Israel, but once “we have the Army orders in hand, the barrels would also be made in India.”

A rifle has three main components, bolt, carrier and barrel. Production of the first two components started with the inauguration of the facility.

Mr Wadhawan said that if the Government allows manufacture of ammunitions in the private sector, which it is likely to, then PLR will also get into that field.

Editor's Note: Senior Correspondent Shweta Sehgal visited the facility at the invitation of Punj Lloyd.