

## South Korea eyes additional F-35s

THE REPUBLIC of Korea Air Force (ROKAF) is planning to acquire 20 additional F-35As, according to reports in local media. Citing "multiple government sources", a December 21 report in the *JoongAng Ilbo* newspaper stated that the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) has begun a preliminary study for the subsequent phase of the ROKAF's next-generation fighter programme.

Seoul ordered 40 F-35As for \$6.7bn under the previous part of the programme, F-X Phase III. Deliveries are scheduled to begin later this year. South Korea originally planned to introduce 60 advanced fighters by 2021.

Although various options will be assessed for the follow-on phase, the Lightning II is said to be the only aircraft that meets the DAPA's requirements for stealth capability, enabling attacks on critical North Korean facilities. The ROKAF apparently intends to begin introducing the 20 new fighters in 2023.

In related news, reports in the Japanese media suggest that the Japan Ministry of Defense is considering buying short take-off and vertical landing (STOVL) F-35Bs to operate from its Izumo-class carriers. The Japan Air Self-Defense Force plans to buy a total of 42 F-35As, 38 of which will be assembled at Nagoya by Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

## Second Chinese Army Y-9 delivered

A SECOND new production Shaanxi Y-9 medium transport aircraft has been delivered to the China People's Liberation Army Aviation Corps (PLAAC). The additional aircraft,

serial number LH94011, arrived at Beijing-Tongxian air base on December 15 to join the 81st Army Aviation Brigade.

The first of the PLAAC Y-9s, LH94010, joined the

81st Brigade on December 22, 2016, and arrival of the second will further boost its long-range transport capability. The Y-9, a stretched version of the Shaanxi Y-8F with

increased payload and range, is also in service with the PLA's air and naval air forces. **Dave Allport**



Y-9 LH94011 arrives at Beijing-Tongxian Air Base on delivery to the 81st Army Aviation Brigade. Chinese PLA/Cong Yan Nan

## Indian Air Force retires Mi-8

A CEREMONY marking the phasing out of the Indian Air Force (IAF's) Mi-8 transport helicopter was held at Air Force Station Yelahanka in Bengaluru on December 17. The event was attended by veterans headed by Air Chief Marshal (Ret'd) Fali Homi Major PVSM, AVSM, SC, VM, ADC. He flew the last Mi-8 sortie together with the commanding officer of 112 Helicopter Unit, the final operator.

The Mi-8 first arrived in Bombay in 1971 and was formally inducted in the IAF inventory the following year. A total of 107 examples were

received up to 1988. Mi-8s served with ten operational helicopter units and were involved in campaigns including Operation Meghdoot in the Siachen Glacier and Operation Pawan in Sri Lanka. The helicopter was also used extensively for humanitarian and disaster relief missions.

**Right: Former air chief, ACM (Ret'd) Fali Major, the only helicopter pilot to have commanded the IAF, was given the honour of flying the last Mi-8 sortie at Yelahanka. He piloted the aircraft from the left seat. Sanjay Simha**



## Specially marked F-CK-1D at Hsinchu

SEVERAL REPUBLIC of China Air Force (ROCAF) aircraft have been adorned with special tail markings in recent months. F-CK-1D Hsiung-Ying 1627/88-

8118 of the Tainan-based 1st Tactical Fighter Wing (443rd TFW) is seen landing at Hsinchu Air Base for the annual Open Day on November 20. The

ROCAF is now increasingly using single-digit wing numbers instead of the three-digit versions that have been used by the service for over 40 years.

## First AH-64Es arrive in Indonesia

THE FIRST three AH-64Es for the Tentara Nasional Indonesia – Angkatan Darat (TNI-AD, Indonesian National Defence – Army) have been delivered to the country. The Apache Guardians – including HS-7211 and HS-7212 – arrived at Semarang, Java, on December 18, on board US Air Force C-17As.

In August 2013, the US Defense Secretary confirmed that agreement had been reached to supply eight AH-64Es to the TNI-AD, at a reported value of \$500m. In January 2015, the US Department of Defense announced the award of an FMS contract to Boeing, for the manufacture of the eight helicopters.



Arnold ten Pas