

IAF's defence network set for Dec boost

Operation Of Integrated Control System Will Plug Holes In Surveillance

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New Delhi: By the end of this year, India will take a significant step towards plugging some gaping holes in its existing air surveillance and defence network.

That is when the first five nodes of IACCS (integrated air command and control system) will become operational in the western and south-western sectors.

IAF is now also moving the case for government approval for the next five integrated air command and control system nodes, which will be even bigger and complex to cover the rest of the country and island territories, say officials.

Though the integrated air command and control system project was mooted by IAF in 1998, it's only now that the critical requirement to have a fully-automated network to integrate the wide array of military radars with each other as well as with civilian radars has gained momentum.

"The aim is to detect and tackle enemy and terror aerial threats in real-time by putting in place a composite and enhanced surveillance capability," said an official.

With the country's air defence coverage being far from impregnable, especially over central and peninsular India, which can be exploited by aircraft with hostile intent, several plans are cur-



FLYING HIGH: Advanced Light Helicopters of the IAF's Sarang aerobatics team rehearse for the Air Force Day celebration at the Hindon airbase on Thursday

rently in motion. After acquiring three Israeli Phalcon AWACS (airborne warning and control system) aircraft for \$1.1 billion, for instance, IAF's ongoing radar acquisitions include 19 LLTRs

(low-level transportable radars), four MPRs (medium-power radars), six mountain radars and 30 indigenous medium-range Rohini radars, among others. The automated IACCS will enable quick transfer of data from ground-based radars as well as AWACS and aerostat radars to one central place. With multi-sensor tracking and data fusion ensuring "a filtered and composite air situation picture" at the central hub, the timely detection and neutralization of threats will be possible.

Progress, of course, has also been made towards integrating the five Airports Authority of India radars at Delhi, Mumbai, Ahmedabad, Chennai and Kolkata into IAF's air defence network. "IACCS permits conduct of operations from one central place, facilitating as it does real-time transportation of images, data and voice from satellites, aircraft and ground stations," said another officer.

"We are moving towards a seamless 'sensor-to-shooter loop' by the integration of all ground-based and airborne sensors with command and control centres, which in turn can direct air defence and other weapons," he added.

The digital information grid AFNET (air force network) to replace the old communication network set-up using the tropo-scatter technology of the 1950s, incidentally, became operational last year. IACCS will ride the AFNET backbone.