



# India Approves Acquisition of MQ-9B Armed Drones from the US

## Why in News?

Recently, India's Ministry of Defence has granted approval for the **procurement of 31 MQ-9B armed drones** from the **United States**. The deal, worth a little over \$3 billion, is expected to be announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's state visit to Washington.

- The acquisition of these advanced drones aims to **enhance India's surveillance capabilities and strengthen its armed forces**.

## What are MQ-9B Armed Drones?

### ▪ About:

- The MQ-9B drone is a variant of the **MQ-9 "Reaper"** which was used to launch a modified version of the Hellfire missile that eliminated **al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri in Kabul**.
- The **MQ-9B** has two variants **SkyGuardian and its sibling SeaGuardian**. The Indian Navy has been operating the MQ-9B Sea Guardian since 2020.
- The drone can operate at **over 40,000 feet**, giving the Indian military surveillance capacity in the high-altitude Himalayan border areas.
- The Predator also has the **maximum endurance of 40 hours**, making it useful for long-hour surveillance.
- MQ-9B drones are equipped with advanced features such as automatic take-off and landing, detect and avoid system, anti-spoofing GPS, and encrypted communication links.

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# MQ-9B

Predator Drones



Max Gross Takeoff Weight: **5,670 kg**

Fuel Capacity: **2,721 kg**

Payload Capacity: **2,177 kg across 9 hardpoints (8 wing, 1 centerline)**



## Crew:

**Two pilots in ground control stations**



## Weapons

**Laser guided missiles**

**Anti-tank missiles**

**Anti-ship missiles**



## Missions

- **Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief**
- **Search and Rescue**
- **Law Enforcement**
- **Border Enforcement**
- **Defensive Counter Air**
- **Airborne Early Warning**

## Missions

- **Electronic Warfare**
- **Anti-Surface Warfare**
- **Anti-Submarine Warfare**
- **Airborne Mine Counter Measures**
- **Long-Range Strategic ISR**
- **Over-the-Horizon Targeting**



### ▪ **Need For India:**

- India needs MQ-9B armed drones to enhance its surveillance and strike capabilities across its **land and maritime borders**, especially in the context of the **ongoing standoff with China in Ladakh** and the **rising tensions with Pakistan**.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to counter the growing presence of **Chinese submarines and warships in the Indian Ocean Region**, and to protect its **vital sea lanes of communication and trade**.
- India also needs MQ-9B armed drones to **support its counter-terrorism** and **counter-insurgency operations in Kashmir** and other regions.

### ▪ **Benefits of Acquiring MQ-9B Armed Drones to India:**

- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will provide India with a **strategic edge over its adversaries**, as it will be able to conduct long-range surveillance and precision strikes without risking its manned aircraft or pilots.
- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will also **boost India's defence cooperation with the US**, which has emerged as a key **partner for India in the Indo-Pacific region**.
  - The deal will also strengthen **India's role in the Quad grouping of democracies along with the US, Japan and Australia**.
- Acquiring MQ-9B armed drones will also create opportunities for India's defence industry,

as it will involve technology transfer and joint production under the Make in India initiative.

**Source: TH**

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