

France is getting tough on the competition

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On 12.04.2024 it became known that Serbia officially refused to buy Russian MiG29 fighters for its army in favor of French *Rafale* produced by *Dassault Aviation*. According to the Associated Press, negotiations have already taken place in Paris between the Serbian President A. Vučić, the French Head of State E. Macron and the management of the manufacturing company, according to the results of which the contract will be signed within two months. We are talking about 12 units of *Rafale* fighter jets worth 3 billion dollars.

Vučić is now insistently convincing the public and the press that this choice is because of the technical problems in the maintenance and repair of the fighter jets and that there is no political motivation behind it. The fact is, however, that Serbia has not only deprived Russia of an opportunity to make a lot of money, but also marked the beginning of its army's transition to the NATO weapons and standards.

As for France, the announced contract will be another major achievement in the French military-industrial complex. At this stage, practically the entire mentioned complex of the country is working around the clock. This is mainly due to three factors: quality, the demands of the Ukrainian frontline and political lobbying for domestic products. And the last point is crucial for the successful implementation of French products. Paris literally “takes one contract after another”, competently using the methods combined pressure on customers and competitors. And the advantages of Paris are doubly tangible when it comes to deals from which countries unfriendly to France are pushed out. Thus, in early spring, the French government made a successful political combination in European structures and gave its consent to approve another \$40 billion package of financial aid to Kiev for the needs of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in exchange for the Council of Europe's ban on buying artillery shells from Turkey with this money. Thus, Ukraine was forced to continue buying ammunition from European countries, mainly from France, while Turkish factories could fill the current catastrophic shortage of shells in the Ukrainian AF, but are idle.

Another piece of news is interesting in this light. On February 20, 2024, it became known that *Hindustan Shipyard Limited* shipbuilding company, owned by the Indian MoD, terminated the previously concluded contract with a Turkish company for the design of support ships and completely excluded the Turkish side from the program for the construction of 5 fleet support ships for the Indian Navy.

The Indian media linked this decision to political factors, particularly the problem of Turkey's alliance with Pakistan, which is hostile to India. However, we consider a very significant event, it becomes clear why New Delhi actually canceled the contract. After all, Turkey and Pakistan have already been allies at the time of its conclusion, which means that the argument suggested the Indian press was too weak. The fact is that less than a month before the termination of the Indo-Turkish contract, on January 24, a French delegation headed by E. Macron accompanied high-ranking officers of the French Armed Forces and heads of French defense companies visited India. As a result of the talks, the parties concluded a few large-scale contracts for the purchase of French arms products by New Delhi

and the joint production of a number of high-tech weapons. Agreements on the construction of submarines and warships for various purposes were mentioned in this context.

In the light of these data, it is not difficult to guess to whom the Indian side has entrusted the strengthening of its Navy, the only weak element in the Armed Forces of the Republic of India, both in terms of quality and quantity.

This finally confirms France's position as the world's second largest arms exporter after the United States. A country whose strong position also allows it to inflict political and economic damage on its geopolitical rivals. It is possible that the breakthrough of the French military-industrial complex observed last year is also largely connected to the "compensatory" support of the United States, after Canberra, under pressure from AUKUS (the Trilateral Defense Alliance of the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia), pulled out of a major contract with France last spring to build the latest type of submarines for the Australian Navy.