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Details Security Wednesday, 19 November 2025 09:30 President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Tuesday announced plans to modernize the countrys armed forces, highlighting agreements with international partners to upgrade equipment and enhance operational capabilities. Speaking during a parliamentary debate on budget allocations for the Ministry of Defence and Public Security, Dissanayake said the government had secured substantial support from countries including India, the United States, and Australia. India has provided approximately 70 jeeps along with technical expertise. The United States will supply 10 TH57 helicopters, and tenders have already been called to repair our existing fleet, he said. The modernization programme also includes the acquisition of two C-130 aircraft scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027, aimed at strengthening the Air Forces strategic and logistical capacity. Additionally, Sri Lanka has received two Beachcraft aircraftKA360 and KA350from the U.S. and Australia to improve surveillance and transport capabilities. Our helicopter fleet has weakened over time. With 10 new helicopters and repairs underway, we are laying the foundation for a strong, efficient, and technologically advanced military. Dissanayake said, emphasizing the governments commitment to a modern defence force. The Sri Lanka Air Force is set to significantly enhance its operational capabilities in 2025 with the acquisition of eight Bell 206 helicopters from the United States and one FT-7 trainer aircraft from Pakistan. Air Marshal Udeni Rajapaksa confirmed that the U.S. will deliver the helicopters, specifically TH-57 Sea Ranger Bell 206 models, in the first quarter of the year. These helicopters, widely used for training and operations by the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps, were secured after extensive negotiations aimed at strengthening Sri Lankas air capabilities. During a visit to Pakistan, Air Marshal Rajapaksa also secured an FT-7 trainer aircraft as a gift, which will enhance pilot training and contribute to the ongoing modernization of the Air Force fleet. Additionally, the SLAF recently added two advanced Beechcraft aircraft to its fleeta King Air 360ER from the United States and a King Air 350 from Australia. These aircraft, now operational, are being used for search-and-rescue missions and counter-narcotics operations, bolstering maritime security and deepening US-Sri Lankan defense cooperation. Efforts to modernize the Air Force also include an ongoing project with Israel Aerospace Industries to upgrade five Kfir fighter jets. The updated C12 models, equipped with advanced avionics, will replace older versions and are expected to join the fleet in 2025. Alongside these efforts, the Air Force has invested in new drone defense systems, radar technologies, and air defense systems to enhance national security. Maritime surveillance has become a key focus, with operations targeting threats such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal fishing. These efforts aim to safeguard Sri Lankan waters and provide protection for local fishermen against piracy. Recent acquisitions also include two Chinese-made Y12 transport aircraft, which have further expanded the Air Forces operational range. With these developments, the Sri Lanka Air Force is poised to continue its evolution into a modern, efficient, and robust defense force capable of addressing emerging security challenges and maintaining the nations sovereignty. By Gaganl Weerakoon With the dawn of 2025, the Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) unveiled its plan to enhance its fleet and air capabilities, which includes the addition of eight Bell 206 helicopters from the United States and an FT-7 trainer aircraft from Pakistan. SLAF Commander, Air Marshal Udeni Rajapaksa, addressing his personnel as work commenced for the New Year, elaborated on the plans. He revealed that the United States will deliver eight TH-57 Sea Ranger helicopters to the SLAF in the first quarter of 2025.Further, during bilateral talks with Pakistan, which took place during Air Marshal Rajapaksas visit, the SLAF secured an FT-7 trainer aircraft as a grant. The Commander confirmed that the SLAF will receive this jet in the near future, further strengthening the Air Forces fleet. In addition to the new acquisitions, the SLAF is in the process of modernising its fleet of Kfir fighter jets. An agreement signed with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) in 2021 will see the upgrade of five Kfir jets. The Commander confirmed that the upgraded C12 Kfir jets, which will replace the older C2 and C3 models, will be integrated into the SLAF fleet in 2025. These jets will play a critical role in surveillance operations across the Indian Ocean. The SLAF received a Beechcraft King Air 360ER from the United States last September, followed by a Beechcraft King Air 350 from Australia in December. These aircraft are designed to enhance Sri Lankas capabilities in search and rescue operations, drug interdiction, and combating trafficking and smuggling. They will also contribute to the countrys maritime surveillance efforts and reinforce the defence cooperation between Sri Lanka and the United States. Air Marshal Rajapaksa explained that these aircraft have already been deployed in surveillance operations across Sri Lankas waters to combat maritime threats such as drug trafficking, human smuggling, and illegal fishing, while also ensuring the protection of local fishermen and naval personnel from piracy. As part of its fleet expansion, the SLAF also procured two Chinese-made Y-12 aircraft last year. The SLAF is further enhancing its defence capabilities by acquiring modern drone security systems, as well as new air defence and radar systems. By acquiring modern drone security units and advanced air defence weapons, the SLAF has initiated a programme in collaboration with the Government to upgrade both air defence and radar systems. As the Government aims to boost the economy through enhancing the tourism industry, the Sri Lanka Air Force has also launched several programmes to support these efforts, the Commander stated. COLOMBO ; President Anura Kumara Dissanayake announced his governments commitment to transforming Sri Lankas armed forces into a modern, technologically advanced military, with significant international assistance already secured. Speaking during the debate on allocations for the Ministry of Defence and Public Security on Tuesday, Nov 18 in parliament, the President detailed a series of agreements with global partners aimed at upgrading the countrys defense capabilities. In recent times, we have received substantial international support to modernize our military. India has provided approximately 70 jeeps along with technical expertise. The United States will supply 10 TH57 helicopters, and tenders have already been called to repair our existing fleet, he said. The modernization plan includes two C-130 aircraft, scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027, through cooperation with the United States and Australia. These aircraft, the President emphasized, are critical for strengthening the Air Forces operational capacity. Sri Lanka has also received two Beachcraft aircraftKA360 and KA350from the U.S. and Australia, bolstering surveillance and transport capabilities. Our helicopter fleet has weakened over time. With 10 new helicopters and repairs underway, we are laying the foundation for a strong, efficient, and technologically advanced military, the President declared. By Zulfick Farzan 18-11-2025 | 8:13 PMCOLOMBO (News 1st); President Anura Kumara Dissanayake announced his governments commitment to transforming Sri Lankas armed forces into a modern, technologically advanced military, with significant international assistance already secured.Speaking during the debate on allocations for the Ministry of Defence and Public Security, the President detailed a series of agreements with global partners aimed at upgrading the countrys defense capabilities.In recent times, we have received substantial international support to modernize our military. India has provided approximately 70 jeeps along with technical expertise. The United States will supply 10 TH57 helicopters, and tenders have already been called to repair our existing fleet, he said.The modernization plan includes two C-130 aircraft, scheduled for delivery in 2026 and 2027, through cooperation with the United States and Australia. These aircraft, the President emphasized, are critical for strengthening the Air Forces operational capacity.Sri Lanka has also received two Beachcraft aircraftKA360 and KA350from the U.S. and Australia, bolstering surveillance and transport capabilities.Our helicopter fleet has weakened over time. With 10 new helicopters and repairs underway, we are laying the foundation for a strong, efficient, and technologically advanced military, the President declared.The President said the governments policy is to build a defence force capable of responding to emerging technical threats, particularly in cyberspace, while also strengthening the countrys maritime and airspace security capabilities.He made these remarks while dismissing concerns that communal tensions or racist conflicts could escalate into armed conflict.He also outlined the support being extended to Sri Lankas security forces by India and the United States.India has provided 70 jeeps along with a range of technical assistance, and has proposed supporting the establishment of a technical academy to enhance the skill levels of the armed forces.The United States has committed to gifting 10 TF57 helicopters to Sri Lanka in 2026. In addition, the US and Australia will gift two C-130 aircraft to the Sri Lanka Air Force in 2026 and 2027.The President added that KA-360 and KA-350 Beechcraft aircraft have already been gifted by the US and Australia. (Newswire) The Sri Lanka Air Force (SLAF) is structured as a professional military force consisting of a Regular Air Force, a Regular Air Force Reserve, and volunteer reserve components. Its command is centralized under the Commander of the Air Force, who oversees directorates for air operations, technical services, administration, and equipment. A specialized ground combat branch, the SLAF Regiment, is responsible for force protection, ground-based air defense, and airfield security. The SLAFs strategic doctrine is fundamentally shaped by its experience during the Sri Lankan Civil War, prioritizing the support of army and navy operations. This doctrine emphasizes the forward deployment of air assets to provide rapid and decisive response. A key contemporary mission is the aerospace surveillance and reconnaissance of Sri Lanka's extensive Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) and Flight Information Region. In 2022, the SLAF officially launched its "Air Power Doctrine," which codifies the operational lessons from its long internal conflict. A joint air-naval doctrine with the Sri Lanka Navy is also being developed to improve coordination in maritime security. The SLAF is also responsible for national cyber security, managing the security of key state digital infrastructure. A primary effort is the upgrade of five IAI Kfir fighter aircraft to a 4.5-generation standard in a \$50 million program with Israel Aerospace Industries, set to conclude by the end of 2025. This modernization includes new radar, avionics, and communication systems, and extends the jets' service life by 15 years. The SLAF is also overhauling its two C-130 Hercules transport aircraft to revive its heavy airlift capability. To enhance maritime surveillance, the force inducted a Beechcraft King Air 360ER in October 2024 through a U.S. Department of Defense program and has received Dornier 228 aircraft from India. Other initiatives include procuring Harbin Y-12 light transport aircraft, overhauling Mi-17 and Mi-35 helicopters, and seeking to improve its aging air defense network.

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