IAF Joins INIOCHOS-25 With Su-30 MKI Fighters: The Importance of Mediterranean Drills for India

Victor Growth

The Indian Air Force (IAF) has steadily solidified its position as a key player in global defense cooperation by actively participating in multinational exercises. One such significant engagement is the **Iniochos exercise**, hosted annually by Greece's Hellenic Air Force (HAF).

IAF's involvement in Iniochos-23 and now Iniochos-25 highlights India's growing emphasis on interoperability, combat readiness, and defense diplomacy.

IAF's Participation in INIOCHOS-25

The IAF is actively participating in **Exercise INIOCHOS-25**, a high-intensity multinational air drill hosted by the HAF at **Andravida Air Base, Greece**, from **March 31 to April 11, 2025**.

The IAF contingent comprises:

- **Su-30 MKI fighter jets**
- **IL-78 mid-air refuelers**
- **C-17 Globemaster transport aircraft**

INIOCHOS-25 involves participation from **15 countries**, including **France, Israel, Italy, Montenegro, Poland, Qatar, Slovenia, Spain, the UAE, the United States, Cyprus, Bahrain, and Slovakia**.

The exercise focuses on:

- **Offensive & Defensive Counterair Operations**
- **Strategic Air Operations**
- **Combat Search and Rescue**
- **Time-Sensitive Targeting**
- **Protection of High-Value Airborne Assets**

The IAF's participation enhances its operational exposure, allowing its pilots to **train in complex, real-world combat scenarios** and exchange tactical knowledge with allied air forces.

Iniochos: A Prestigious Air Exercise

Originating in the 1980s, Iniochos has evolved into one of **Europe's most challenging air combat training platforms**. It is conducted under a **Single Base Concept**, meaning all operations are centralized at **Andravida Air Base**, offering a unique training environment that simulates modern air warfare.

Participating forces engage in **multi-dimensional combat**, including air superiority missions, anti-surface warfare, and suppression of integrated air defense systems.

Over the years, the exercise has seen participation from **NATO and non-NATO nations**, including the **U.S., France, Italy, Israel, Saudi Arabia, and India**.

IAF's Entry Into Iniochos

The IAF first participated in **Iniochos-23 (April 24–May 4, 2023)**, marking a significant step in its engagement with European air forces. The **Su-30 MKIs** operated alongside **French Rafales, U.S. F-16s, Italian Tornados, and Greek Mirage 2000s** in air-to-air and air-to-ground combat scenarios.

The IAF's role in **both Iniochos-23 and Iniochos-25** underscores its ability to **project power overseas**, sustain long-range deployments, and engage in **multilateral defense cooperation**.

Operational Significance for the IAF

The IAF's involvement in **Iniochos-25** serves several strategic and operational purposes:

1. **Combat Training in Realistic Environments**
    - Engaging in advanced combat scenarios enhances pilots' tactical acumen.
    - The use of **high-tech debriefing tools** (GPS trackers, shot assessment software) improves mission performance.
2. **Interoperability with Global Air Forces**
    - The IAF gains **firsthand exposure to NATO-standard tactics and procedures**.

Victor Growth

- Operating alongside **F-15s, MQ-9 drones, and Rafales** enhances adaptability in joint operations.

3. **Strengthening Defense Ties**
    - Participation fosters defense cooperation between **India and Greece**, aligning with India's broader geopolitical strategy.
    - The exercise enhances military diplomacy, strengthening India's presence in the Mediterranean region.

Strategic Implications for India

The IAF's participation in **overseas drills like Iniochos** reflects **India's shift toward global defense collaboration and power projection**. Historically focused on regional security, the IAF is now enhancing its capabilities for **long-range missions** and **multinational operations**.

Furthermore, as Greece holds a key **strategic position in the Mediterranean**, closer defense relations could lead to future collaborations in **joint training, technology exchange, and maritime security**.

Conclusion

By participating in **Iniochos-25**, the Indian Air Force reinforces its commitment to **combat excellence, defense cooperation, and strategic outreach**. As the IAF continues to engage in multinational exercises, it not only hones its operational skills but also strengthens India's global defense partnerships.

The Mediterranean skies serve as a **testing ground for India's evolving air power**, reflecting its aspirations as a key player in the modern security landscape.

Facebook

Instagram

Youtube

Vector Growth