IRKUT UPBEAT ON SU-30SM PROSPECTS

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Moscow-based aircraft manufacturer **Irkut** is showcasing the multirole Sukhoi **Su-30SM** fighter at the Dubai air show, among a host of military products on display from the Russian industry delegation.

The forecast for Su-30SM orders exceeds more than 100 aircraft, but Russian officials are already planning a major upgrade programme for the twin-engined fighter.

Rostec chief executive Sergey Chemezov, who toured the show's exhibit hall on 8 November, has previously announced that a “major upgrade” of the Su-30SM is being planned to improve combat effectiveness.

Simultaneously, the Indian government also has expressed interest in upgrading an improved version of the Su-30SM – dubbed the Su-30MKI – with new avionics and radar systems. That upgrade programme is expected to lead to a collaboration with Russian and Indian industry, Chemezov has said.

Another upgrade already in development with India adds the supersonic Brahmos cruise missile, which is itself a Russian-Indian collaboration. The first test flight of a Brahmos-equipped Su-30MKI

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is still planned by the end of this year, with the first missile launch scheduled in 2016.

In the Middle East and African region, Irkut is continuing to deliver Su-30SM fighters to Algeria. The Algerian government signed an order for a third batch of Su-30SMs last April, involving 14 aircraft deliveries.

“Contrary to popular opinion about Russian fighters, the Irkut-built Su-30 demonstrates quite a high operability of the aircraft fleet in the hands of qualified operators. This is particularly true in the case of Algerian air force,” Irkut says.

Russia is also continuing to deliver Su-30SMs to export customer Kazakhstan. The nation's order may kick-off a wave of fighter modernisation programmes in former Soviet republics. Earlier this year, for example, Belarus announced plans to acquire the Su-30SM after 2020.

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