



MINISTÈRE DES ARMÉES

*Liberté
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**Madame Florence Parly,
ministre des Armées**

Cérémonie d'incorporation des 5 premiers Rafale à l'Inde

Ambala, le 10 septembre 2020

– Seul le prononcé fait foi –

Dear Minister Rajnath Singh,
Ladies and gentlemen,
Dear friends,

First of all, I would like to express my heartfelt thanks to Minister Rajnath Singh and the authorities of the Republic of India for the warmth of their welcome.

Coming to India is a unique experience. A unique land of vibrant colours, breathtaking landscapes and a millennium of rich history, India is unlike any other. An encounter with “Incredible India”, it is not something you can easily forget. So, I am truly delighted that we managed to be here, despite the Covid-19 crisis.

Today is a stellar achievement for both of our countries. Together, we are writing a new chapter in India-France defence ties. And it is an honour for me to attend this beautiful ceremony.

As you may know, “Rafale” literally means “Gust of wind” in French if you aim at being poetic or “Burst of fire” if you think more of the battlefield. Both meanings express an incredible strength. And I like to think that this is also a symbol of the strong ties between our two countries.

And since I am talking about meanings, allow me to say that the 36 Rafale program means many things. In military terms, it means that India will acquire a world-class capability – truly, among the best in the world – that will give your Air force an incredible sovereign tool. In strategic terms, it means India will have an edge over the entire region to defend itself and protect its people.

In industrial terms, it means a lot, too. India is already a major player in this industrial project, which, will considerably strengthen its technological base and develop its skills.

And I would like to reaffirm how much France, more than any other country, understands the necessity of the Indian content. We are fully committed to the "Make in India" initiative, as well as to the further integration of Indian manufacturers into our global supply chains. Make in India has been a reality for French industry for several years, particularly for defence equipment such as submarines. Many French companies and design offices are now established in India - and I hope that others will come to offer their support and services.

But this is not only a military project, or an industrial project. Behind those masses of dark steel and carbon fibres, behind those majestic firebirds, there is, above all, a friendship. A commonality of interests, of vision, of values in the region. A common attachment to democracy, multilateralism, the rules-based order. It takes a lot of confidence, for India, to bet on France; and a lot of confidence, too, for France, to share with India a capability that is so close to the core of our sovereignty and our strategic autonomy – the result of immense investments over decades.

And there is one thing that is absolutely certain about the few Rafale that are behind us: they are fully combat-proven. And I can tell you this with the utmost confidence. Because, for many years now, the Rafale has successfully performed in our current operations a uniquely wide variety of missions, both ashore and from our aircraft carrier.

French Air Force Rafales have taken a leading role in Mali, helping destroy armed terrorist groups and support friendly troops in contact. As part of the International military intervention against ISIS in Iraq and Syria, they operate in difficult conditions, far from their bases, taking advantage of their huge operational range to strike distant targets with a surgical precision.

So trust me, I know the Rafale is a powerful military aircraft, because France use it to defend the French people. And we are proud to share our know-how with you. Because our friendship is rock-solid

and time-tested. And I am happy our strategic partnership is based on mutual understanding, common interests, and deep trust.

So, it is a great pride to see today these first 5 Rafale inducted in time in the Indian army, despite the Covid-19 crisis. We are particularly attentive to the respect of delivery deadlines. We will ensure this, as France is determined to support the Indian Air Force to “touch the Sky with glory” with – as for now – the remaining 31 Rafale as soon as possible.

All this, of course, did not come without extremely hard work. So, today I would like to warmly congratulate all the people and teams on both sides who put their hearts and souls into making today's delivery ceremony possible.

Our partnership will be even more crucial in the post-pandemic world. I am confident that we will emerge from this current challenge more resilient and innovative than before. We worked together closely on the international response to the Covid-19 pandemic as well as providing reciprocal assistance according to the needs of the two countries. When France was going through a critical phase of this pandemic earlier, India was by our side. I wish to say thank you and also to tell you that as in any strong friendship, you can count on us. We will also be by your side.

We support your candidacy for the UN Security Council. And India's election as a member in 2021-2022 represents an opportunity to promote together a common vision of international peace and security, anchored to the respect of international law.

There is so much we can do together. I am confident in our ability to come up with new ideas to feed and renew constantly our partnership. I am confident for our future. It is as bright as this sky, as strong as these Rafale, and as bold as our next common enterprises.

Thank you for your attention.