

RM2.2bil life extension for RMAF's Sukhois

By [Adrian David](#) - March 26, 2019 @ 2:22pm

LANGKAWI: The country's foremost but ageing multi-role combat aircraft have been given a new lease of life, for another 15 years.

The New Straits Times has reliably learnt that the two squadrons of 18 Sukhoi Su-30MKM, based at Gong Kedak in Terengganu, are being given a full refurbishment package to the tune of RM2.2 billion, until 2035. This followed concerns by RMAF chief General Tan Sri

Affendi Buang that 40 per cent of its assets required an immediate upgrade. The refurbishment package includes service life extension for the Flankers' airframe, avionics, weapons systems and overhaul of its engines.

"Although it appears an expensive affair, in reality, this is a huge cost-saving as the local entity is able to manage the task at only 70 per cent of that cost (RM2.2 billion).

"Additionally, the package allows for highly skilled Malaysian technicians and engineers to be employed, hence, providing job opportunities for locals," said a defence industry senior ranking official.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, told the NST that the deal further enhanced the entrepreneurial skills and capability of Malaysians in handling such a large task in the field of aviation and aerospace.

Yesterday, the NST broke the story that Aerospace Technology Systems Corp (ATSC) had won the deal to refurbish the Flanker jets, in stages since last year. ATSC, thus, became the first local entity to undertake fighter aircraft maintenance, repair and overhaul.

The first of the jets, with military registration number M52-11, underwent a 'Preventive and Restoration Work' after the fighter jet reached ten years of active service.

Prime Minister Tun Dr Mahathir Mohamad witnessed the handing-over of the aircraft by ATSC to the RMAF after opening the 15th edition of the Langkawi International Maritime and Aerospace (Lima) 2019 exhibition at the Mahsuri International Exhibition Centre at Padang Matsirat.

"ATSC hired 10 Malaysian youths who graduated with a Masters in aircraft designing, propulsion and flight control from the Moscow Institute of Aviation in Russia.

"An equal number of highly skilled and professional technicians and engineers, who had retired from the RMAF, have also been roped in to retain local expertise and resources," said the official. Meanwhile, ATSC chief executive officer Lieutenant-Colonel (Rtd) Datuk Mohd Fadzar Suhada said the company was able to undertake the task through collaboration with several agencies.

These, he said, included the RMAF's Aerospace Engineering Services Centre (Puspeka), the Defence Ministry's Science and Technology Research Institute (Stride), Directorate General of Technical Airworthiness, Caidmark Sdn Bhd, Epic Aero Sdn Bhd and SME Aerospace Sdn Bhd.

Fadzar, who retired from the RMAF after 26 years as head of No. 11 Squadron's engineering branch, said they handed over the particular aircraft following 22 months of overhaul.

"We are now capable of reducing this overhaul time frame to nine months and four months for service life extension. Another two aircraft also underwent service life extension and were recently handed over to the RMAF.

"The remaining 15 Sukhois will undergo similar jobs by next year," said Fadzar, who graduated from the Zhukovsky Flight Training Centre in Moscow in 2007.

Other than the Flankers, the RMAF's other ageing aircraft include the BAE Systems Hawk 100/200 fighter jets, Boeing F/A-18D Hornets and a fleet of Lockheed C-130 Hercules, in service for over 20 years. The Sikorsky S-61A-4 Nuri helicopters have, meanwhile, served the RMAF for over 40 years.

