Sukhois: Indos want more

JAKARTA – Indonesia’s armed forces want a squadron, or at least 12 more Russian Sukhoi Su-30s, despite a controversy over a purchase of four of the jets earlier this year.

Indonesia bought the first batch of two Su-27 jets and two similar Su-30s, along with two Mi-35 helicopters, in counter-trade deal with Russia in April.

Two of the four planes have been delivered.

“We want more (Sukhois) because four are not enough (for operations). I will talk with officials about more for next year,” armed forces chief General Endriartono Sutarto said.

“We want at least one full squadron with between 12 and 16 planes.”

By Dr Carlo Kopp

In regional contingencies the ADF could face over the next decade, the F-111 would provide the fire support for diggers on the ground.

The argument that the F-111 is of no value in the Army support role is bunk.

The most likely regional contingencies the ADF could face are like Timor-like – an der-developed enclaves exploding in ethnic or more religious conflicts. An Islamic-fascist militia, armed with RPGs, shoulder-launched SAMs and small arms could cause genuine mayhem with the intensity of Afghanistan and Iraq.

In such a contingency, our soldiers need precision heavy firepower support.

His torically naval guns provided fire support. The Army now sees this as a role for its coming armed reconnaissance helicopters.

Naval fire – an Anzac or FFG would lay down shells on an enemy position. If an enemy sites its strong-point amidst civilian housing the collateral damage would have dead civilians on TV worldwide within minutes. Even with guided naval artillery rounds, pre-ces selection of aimpoints will remain a genuine problem – and target gets deeper in land would be out of reach.

Armed helicopter fire is better. But face the lethal threat of small arms, RPGs and SAMs.

Civilian collateral damage or the loss of helicopter would both produce a political backlash for an Australian government.

In such an enemy threat, RAAF F-111s armed with low-cost GBU-12 500lb laser-guided bombs offer an alternative – a GBU-12 with a 20-millisecond fuse delay can take out a position with little collateral damage.

The principal challenge in providing such support will be range and persistence over the target. At 450 nautical miles the F-111 can orbit for nearly three hours in a kill box awaiting the command to strike, without aerial refuelling support, out of reach of MANPADS, RPGs and small arms. With aerial refuelling support, crew endurance and bomb load exhaustion are the limiting factors.

The range/endurance, payload and precision of the F-111 would also be invaluable in prepping for the initial lashing of a main force. Supported by special forces on the ground providing targeting and bomb damage assessment, the F-111s could destroy key positions before the Army arrives in strength.

There are no issues in implementing this tactic – the RAAF already trains for precision air support and US Afghanistan experience provides a proven planning template.

Arguments that seek to diminish the value of the F-111 in regional contingencies are unadulterated nonsense.

The F/A-18A is problematic – with min utes of endurance over a target at 400+ nautical miles, it is dependent on tanker support. While a few run ways can support fighter jets, fewer are capable of sup port ing a 707-sized tanker.

There fore tanker support is vital for this operation. More over, to provide for safe delivery of the F-111 would also be in vailable in prepping for the initial lashing of a main force. Supported by special forces on the ground providing targeting and bomb damage assessment, the F-111s could destroy key positions before the Army arrives in strength.

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Third of a series on F-111 options

Why Army needs ‘Pig’ support

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Therefore tanker support is vital for this operation. Moreover, to provide for safe delivery of the F-111 would also be invaluable in preparing for the initial lashing of a main force. Supported by special forces on the ground providing targeting and bomb damage assessment, the F-111s could destroy key positions before the Army arrives in strength.

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