



THE URGENCY OF FOLLOW-UP ON THE PURCHASE OF F-15EX FIGHTER JETS FROM THE U.S.

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Abstract

The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia has recommended a follow-up on the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets from the U.S.. This paper examines the urgency of the follow-up policy on the purchase of the fighter jets. Several parties argue that this policy can be used as a tool to negotiate the U.S. import tariff increase against Indonesia imposed by President Donald Trump. The Government of Indonesia is also expected to consider the economic impact of the purchase by implementing domestic policy solutions, especially for MSMEs and against the potential of layoffs in domestic companies that produce goods for export to the U.S.. Commission I of the DPR RI should remind the Ministry of Defense that the follow-up policy on the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets must be consulted with Commission I of the DPR RI in accordance with Law Number 16 of 2012 on the Defense Industry, regarding the role of DPR RI in conducting oversight of defense procurement by the government.

Introduction

The Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia intends to follow up on the planned purchase of F-15EX fighter jets made by Boeing from the United States (U.S.). Head of the Defense Information Bureau of the Ministry of Defense Brigadier General TNI Frega Ferdinand Wenas Inkiriwang explained that the process of purchasing 24 fighter jets is still ongoing. The Ministry of Defense has recommended it, but its execution is still awaiting approval from the Ministry of Finance (Salim, 2025).

According to aviation industry practitioner and consultant Gerry Soejatman, Indonesia indeed needs additional fighter jets, especially with the capacity and quality found in the F-15EX. Boeing's offer to follow up on the memorandum of understanding (MoU) for the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets is considered something the Government of Indonesia needs to carefully consider. Delaying the execution of the F-15EX fighter jet purchase will affect the availability of production slots, which are quickly running out due to many other countries already placing orders (Pusparisa, 2025).

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Given that the Ministry of Defense's recommendation to follow up on the F-15EX fighter jet purchase comes amid a budget efficiency policy across all ministries and institutions as mandated by Presidential Instruction Number 1 of 2025, the urgency of following up on the purchase needs to be assessed. The Ministry of Defense itself has made budget cuts amounting to IDR 26.9 trillion for Fiscal Year 2025 (Noviansah, 2025). This paper analyzes the urgency of the Government of Indonesia's follow-up on the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets from the U.S..

Procurement of Fighter Jets by the Government of Indonesia since 2022

In 2020, Indonesia's air defense strength totaled 462 aircraft consisting of 41 fighter jets, 39 special attack aircraft, 54 transport aircraft, 109 training aircraft, five reconnaissance and special mission aircraft, 177 helicopters, and 16 attack helicopters. Indonesia's air power ranked 28th in the world, the highest in South-east Asia. However, in terms of the number of fighter jets, Indonesia ranked 48th, behind several other ASEAN countries such as Singapore (22), Vietnam (28), Thailand (30), and Myanmar (36) (Gitiyarko, 2021).

The years 2020 to 2024 represent the third phase of the minimum essential force (MEF) strategic plan. The previous second phase was completed in 2014–2019. Data from the TNI Headquarters stated that by the end of 2019, the MEF target was fulfilled at 63.19 percent of the 100 percent target expected to be achieved by 2024. In fact, the target for the second phase should have already been 75.5 percent. Obstacles faced, apart from budgetary issues, include the procurement process for defense equipment that remains unresolved, for example, the purchase of fighter jets and military satellites (Gitiyarko, 2025).

Since 2022, the Government of Indonesia (Ministry of Defense) has made efforts to replace its aging air fleet, which is 20 to 30 years old (Dewi, 2022). In 2022, Indonesia signed an agreement with France to purchase 42 units of Rafale fighter jets. Chief of Staff of the Air Force (KSAU) Marshal Tonny Harjono stated that six Rafale fighter jets will arrive in Indonesia in 2026 (Janati & Prabowo, 2025). In addition, Indonesia has also been in talks with Russia for a potential acquisition of Su-35 fighter jets. In January 2025, Russian Ambassador to Indonesia Sergei Tolchenov stated that the Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jet deal with Jakarta is still "on the table" (Haryadi, 2025).

In 2023, Indonesia allocated a military budget of approximately USD 8.2 billion, with more than a quarter of this amount allocated to modernize defense equipment and infrastructure. Indonesia also has a separate foreign loan program for the acquisition of high-cost items such as fighter jets, amounting to USD 25 billion through 2024. In 2023, a MoU was also signed between Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto during his visit to the U.S. with Boeing to purchase up to 24 F-15EX fighter jets (Azhar, 2025).

Boeing is currently urging the Government of Indonesia to realize the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets. President of Boeing Southeast Asia, Penny Burt, stated that if Indonesia chooses to buy the F-15EX, Boeing will fulfill its 85 percent local content and offset commitment, in line with national defense and industry priorities. Boeing wants local businesses in Indonesia to be involved in the supply chain, training, maintenance, repair, and operation of the fighter jets (Haryadi, 2025).

This commitment from Boeing came about two years after Indonesia signed a memorandum of understanding with Boeing during the visit of Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto. According to the Ministry of Defense, the F-15EXs purchased by Indonesia will be given a unique code name F-15IDN. It should be noted that the MoU does not mean a final acquisition agreement has been signed (Haryadi, 2025). Domestically, Indonesia is also developing the KF-21 fighter jet in collaboration with South Korea, although financial constraints have prompted discussions to reassess its financial commitment to the project (Haryadi, 2025).

The Urgency of Following Up on the F-15EX Purchase

According to Khairul Fahmi, one of the founders of the Institute for Security and Strategic Studies, the procurement process for the F-15EX fighter jet is quite complex. Politically, the Government of Indonesia needs it as part of defense diplomacy, especially following the imposition of a 32 percent U.S. import tariff on Indonesia. President Prabowo Subianto is under pressure to mitigate the impact of the U.S. policy, which has been postponed until July 2025. Indonesia's economic surplus with the U.S.—its second-largest trading partner—reached USD 18 billion in 2024, with key exports including textiles, footwear, and palm oil (Azhar, 2025).

Furthermore, according to senior economist from IPB University, Prof. Didin S Damanhuri, the Government of Indonesia could finalize the previously delayed F-15EX fighter jet package from the U.S. since 2023. This step can be a 'negotiation tool' regarding the U.S. import tariff set by President Donald Trump (Putra, 2025).

Prof. Didin S. Damanhuri also stated that the Government of Indonesia must promptly determine strategic steps in formulating an economic response to the Trump tariff. Following up on the MoU on the purchase of the F-15EX fighter jet could be one of the policy options. On the other hand, the government must also prepare comprehensive measures to mitigate the domestic impact of the U.S. import tariff, particularly regarding the sustainability of MSMEs and weakening purchasing power. Prof. Didin conveyed that there is a potential ripple effect from the implementation of the U.S. import tariff, including the possibility of layoffs in companies that export to the U.S. (Putra, 2025).

Conclusion

The urgency of purchasing defense equipment is a policy that must be decided jointly between the government and DPR RI, particularly Commission I in accordance with Article 43 paragraph (4) of Law Number 16 of 2012 on the Defense Industry, especially concerning the right of DPR RI to provide consideration in the procurement of defense products in line with the foreign policy pursued by the government as part of national strategic interests.

This becomes increasingly important as the obligation to consult with Commission I of the DPR RI on the procurement of the F-15EX fighter jets was also raised in 2023 when the MoU on the purchase was signed. Member of Commission I of the DPR RI TB Hasanuddin at that time asked Minister of Defense Prabowo Subianto to communicate the reasons for the procurement and budgeting of the F-15EX fighter jets (Maysha & Winarto, 2023). Therefore, in carrying out its oversight function, Commission I of the DPR RI needs to remind the Ministry of Defense to jointly discuss the follow-up plan on the purchase of F-15EX fighter jets.

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