

Air

# Turkey invites Malaysia to join its TF-X future fighter jet program

By: [Burak Ege Bekdil](#) January 13



A crowd of people gather around a full-scale model of Turkish Aerospace Industries' TF-X at the Paris Air Show on June 17, 2019. (Valerie Insinna/Staff)

ANKARA, Turkey — A state-owned Turkish company has invited Malaysia to join the country's indigenous fighter program, the TF-X, following Ankara's suspension from the U.S.-led F-35 Joint Strike Fighter program.

Temel Kotil, CEO of Turkish Aerospace Industries, said he is now awaiting Malaysia's reply. Last year, TAI signed a memorandum of understanding with the Asian nation for the co-production of TF-X composites.

TAI is also considering Indonesia, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Kazakhstan as potential partners or buyers of the future fighter jet.

"[TF-X] will be the first big fighter jet of the Muslims," Kotil said. "Building the aircraft first and then selling it is a modality. But we think it's better if we take in partners at this stage."

The company also invited Malaysia to partner on its Hurkus, a trainer and light attack aircraft.

Meanwhile, the Turkish government is [keen to revive talks](#) with British company Rolls-Royce for the design and production of the TF-X.

Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu said in December that the government wants to move forward with its planned cooperation with Britain for the production of the aircraft. But Turkey must first select an engine for the TF-X and then finalize the aircraft's full design — a process that has lagged behind schedule.

A £100 million (U.S. \$131 million) deal between Rolls-Royce and Turkish manufacturer Kale Group was effectively put on hold amid uncertainties over technology transfer.

In October 2016, Rolls-Royce offered a joint production partnership to Turkey to power the country's planned platforms. The offer involved potential sales to third parties and a production unit in Turkey to manufacture engines for the TF-X as well as helicopters, tanks and missiles.

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A year before that, in October 2015, a memorandum of understanding was signed between Turkey and Rolls-Royce for technological know-how and a production unit. Under the plan, Rolls-Royce would launch an advanced manufacturing and technology center in Turkey — the company's eighth such unit worldwide.

Also in 2017, BAE Systems and TAI signed a \$125 million heads of agreement to collaborate on the first development phase of the TF-X.

Turkey's aerospace and procurement officials now aim to fly the TF-X in the 2025-2026 time frame, despite an original target of 2023.