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MH-60R Multi-Mission Helicopters

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The United States Department of State has approved the sale of **24 MH-60R 'Seahawk' multi-mission** helicopters to India under its Foreign Military Sales (FMS) program.

- These helicopters are considered to be the **world's most advanced maritime helicopter**.
- The proposed sale will provide India the capability to perform anti-surface and anti-submarine warfare missions.
- It will also enhance the Navy's ability to perform secondary missions, including search and rescue, and communications relay.



India-U.S. Defence Relations

- Since 2008, Indo-U.S. defense trade has steadily increased from under the **U.S.\$ 1 billion to over the U.S.\$ 18 billion.**
- The United States has assumed the spot of **India's second largest arms supplier, after Russia.**
- Crucial intended or completed procurements by India from the U.S. includes 13 C-130 Hercules aircraft, 10 C-17 Globemaster aircraft, 12 P-8 Poseidon aircraft, 22 AH-64 Apache helicopters, 15 CH-47 Chinook helicopters, and 145 M777 Howitzer guns.
- India was granted the unique **Major Defence Partner (MDP)** designation in 2016 by the United States.
- India was then given **Strategic Trade Authorisation-1 (STA-1)** status by the U.S. in 2018. The third Asian country after South Korea and Japan (and 37th country globally) to acquire it.
- This was to further facilitate the transfer of technology in the defense and space sectors.
- India also signed the **Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (COMCASA)** agreement with the U.S., providing a legal basis for the U.S. to transfer secure communication equipment to India, increasing military equipment interoperability and real-time data sharing.

Significance

- India will use the enhanced capability as a **net security provider in the Indian Ocean region**, deterrent to regional threats like piracy and drug trafficking and strengthen its homeland defense.
- India has a responsibility to **ensure freedom of movement** throughout the Indian Ocean, stretching from the **Strait of Hormuz to the Strait of Malacca.**