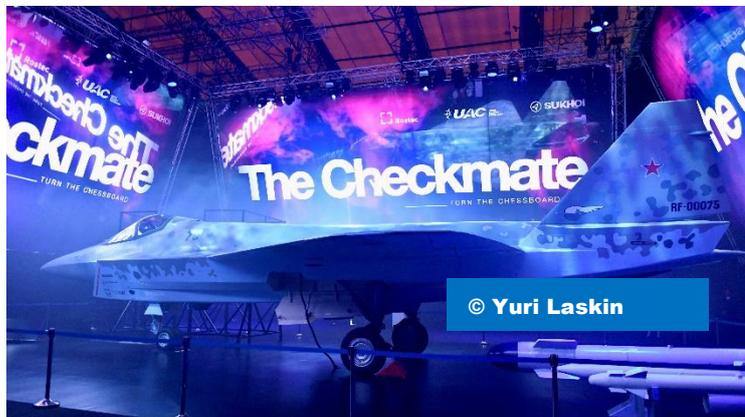


Russia to surprise Dubai Airshow with Checkmate. Will the new LTA to repeat Pantsir-S1 success in MENA?

By Yuri Laskin



Russia plans to have a tremendous exposition at the upcoming Dubai Airshow. According to Dmitry Shugaev, Head of the Federal Service on Military-Technical cooperation with foreign states (FS VTS). The military part of the national exposition will feature a prototype of the Checkmate light tactical aircraft (LTA), Mi-28NE and Ka-52E combat helicopters plus the Orion drone. Both gunships are scheduled to participate in the show flight program.

The Russian exposition incorporates all the leading national enterprises and organizations, including Rostec Corporation with its subsidiaries such as Rosoboronexport, United Aircraft Corporation, Russian Helicopters and High Precision Weapons among the many. Talking to RT about the Checkmate international prospects, Mr. Shugaev called them “definitely good”. The LTA international debut marks a kind of Russian come-back to the world market of single-engine fighters.

“Checkmate still has to go a certain way before becoming an export product, but today it is clear that the declared characteristics are at the level of existing foreign competitors and even surpass them. Therefore, taking into account the fact that the price is declared very competitive, I believe that it will be in demand in its segment”, -noticed FS VTS boss.

He refused to name the MENA states being targeted by the Checkmate as the dialogue had been in the stage of “preliminary consultations” as the LTA hasn't become “a finished product yet”. The Russian choice for Checkmate international debut in Dubai looks absolutely logical due to the regional market importance.

One should also remember the UAE had been an «anchor customer» for the Pantsir SPAAG literally funding the system development. In fact, the

Emirates became the system first operator and history could be repeated with the Checkmate. Following the UAE several MENA nations obtained the Pantsir for close air defense.

Mr. Shugaev mentioned the share of Russian arms and military equipment exports to the countries of MENA as at least \$ 6 billion per year over the past five years “with a definite upward trend”. He named the MENA region among the top five largest buyers of the Russian defense equipment alongside with China, India and Latin America. According to Shugaev, the nations choose the Russian weapons due to their characteristics, reliability and experience in combat use, in particular, within real fighting in Syria.

Speaking about particular regions, he mentioned countries of North Africa to give particular preference to the purchase of armored vehicles, air defense systems, naval equipment, MiG, Sukhoi and Ilyushin aircraft, various helicopters, electronic warfare equipment, and small arms. The greatest demand in sub-Saharan Africa is for helicopters of the Mil family, Sukhoi and MiG aircraft, Pantsir-S1, Tor-M2E and Buk air defense systems, plus Kalashnikov small arms.

The Middle East nations also stressed their interest for the UAV including the Orion-E complexes which attracted interest from 20 nations during the Army 2021 Forum. With such products as Orion-E, Orlan-10E and other latest developments Russia is going to occupy 10% of the military drones' market in the nearest future, claimed Shugaev. The Head of FS VTS confirmed the defense export orders portfolio exceeding USD 52 billion presents a perfectly correct figure despite several western claims on the Russian defense export decrease. Mr. Shugaev named these speculations a part of the PR policy. He stressed his confidence that in the next three to five years the Russian defense industrial complex will not decrease its international operations.

Dmitry Shugaev disclosed several deals being settled in 2021 with the ex-Soviet republics. According to him, Russia delivered to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan Su-30SM aircraft, Mi-35M helicopters, Buk-M2E anti-aircraft missile systems, BTR-80 and BTR-82A armored personnel carriers plus Typhoon-K light armored vehicles and small arms. Both nations were also supplied with Orlan-10E UAV multifunctional complexes.

