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Russia testing fifth-generation fighter Sukhoi PAK FA

By Gleb Fedorov
Sept. 20, 2016

Sukhoi PAK FA (T-50) is Russia's first fifth-generation fighter aircraft. Its main rivals are the United States' F-35 and F-22 and China's Chengdu J-20 and Shenyang J-31. A T-50 aircraft costs about \$50 million.

Russian Defense Ministry officials say six T-50 aircraft are undergoing tests. The aircraft will most likely be inducted into the Russian Aerospace Forces in 2017.

In May, Russian Aerospace Forces Commander-in-Chief Viktor Bondarev told reporters that the T-50 is "indeed a wonderful machine." He said, "Its piloting, navigational and other characteristics enable it to detect other aircraft from a very long distance ... it is unequalled in this. We have something to be proud of, and we are glad that such a machine is coming to us."

The PAK FA project uses established technologies from the MiG 1.44 and Su-47. The fifth-generation fighter aircraft got its engine from the former and acquired technology for the manufacturing of composite parts from the latter.

Many components of the new fighter were created during the course of the modernization of the Su-27, which in its latest modifications – the Su-30SM and Su-35S – approached fifth-generation capabilities.

In the early 2020s, the PAK FA could get a photonics-based radar system using active radio-optical phased array technology (known by its Russian acronym ROFAR). It should be able to view stealth aircraft at distances beyond the range of air-to-air missiles.