

# India, Russia sign AK-203 rifle deal, military logistics pact is ‘put off’

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Defence Minister Rajnath Singh with his Russian counterpart Sergey Shoigu (Twitter/Rajnath Singh)

Visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed “concern” Monday over the situation in Afghanistan and flagged the “fight against terrorism, drug trafficking and organised crime” as key challenges for which Russia and India will have to cooperate.

The two countries signed a contract for the **manufacture of nearly 6 lakh AK-203 rifles**, but “put off” a reciprocal military logistics support agreement (RELOS).

In New Delhi for a bilateral meeting with Prime Minister **Narendra Modi**, Putin said: “We continue to cooperate jointly on global agenda... our positions are quite similar...in the fight against terrorism, also fighting drug trafficking and organised crime.”

“It is natural we are concerned about the development of the situation in Afghanistan,” he said in his opening remarks. He called India a “great power”, a “friendly” country and a “time-tested friend”.

Modi said, “Despite the challenges posed by Covid, the pace of relations between India and Russia has not changed. Our Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership has been continuously strengthening.”

“There have been many fundamental changes at the global level in the last several decades.

A lot of geo-political equations have emerged. But India-Russia friendship has been a constant among all these variables. Both the countries have not only cooperated with each other without any hesitation but have also taken special care of each other’s sensitivities. It is truly a unique and reliable model of inter-State friendship,” he said.

**Putin met Modi at Hyderabad House**, hours after the first India-Russia 2+2 ministerial meeting between Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar with their counterparts Defence Minister Sergey Shoigu and Foreign Minister.

At the 2+2 summit, the two sides **signed two contracts** for manufacture of nearly 6 lakh AK-203 rifles under a joint venture in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, which was cleared by the government just days ago. The deal is worth over Rs 5,000 crore.

Singh also brought up the issue of China’s aggressive posture along the **Line of Actual Control**. He said “the pandemic, the extraordinary militarisation and expansion of armament in our neighbourhood and the completely unprovoked aggression on our northern border since early summer of 2020 have thrown in several challenges” and that India is “confident of overcoming these challenges with its strong political will and inherent capability of its people”.

“ **I warmly thank H.E. President Putin for his visit to India. We exchanged very useful ideas for expanding our strategic, trade & investment, energy, connectivity, defence, science & technology and cultural cooperation. We also shared views on important global and regional issues.**  
**[pic.twitter.com/FQGFgQzsfX](https://pic.twitter.com/FQGFgQzsfX)**  
**— Narendra Modi (@narendramodi) December 6, 2021**

Apart from the agreement for the Kalashnikov rifles, the two countries also signed an agreement for military technology cooperation for the next decade — from 2021 to 2031.

On the issue of Afghanistan, the joint statement said they discussed the “evolving situation in Afghanistan, especially the security situation and its implications in the region, the current political situation, issues related to terrorism, radicalisation and drug trafficking etc.” They outlined priorities which include ensuring formation of a truly inclusive and representative government in Afghanistan, combating terrorism and drug trafficking, providing immediate humanitarian assistance and preserving the rights of women, children and minorities.

“They also discussed the current humanitarian situation and decided to provide immediate humanitarian assistance to the Afghan people,” it said.

Importantly, the leaders emphasised that “Afghanistan’s territory should not be used for sheltering, training, planning or financing any terrorist groups including ISIS, Al Qaeda, LeT etc”.

On defence, both sides agreed to take forward ongoing engagements to encourage “joint manufacturing in India of spare parts, components, aggregates and other products for maintenance of Russian-origin arms and defence equipment under Make-in-India program through transfer of technology and setting up of joint ventures for meeting the needs of the Indian Armed Forces as well as subsequent export to mutually friendly third countries.”

“ **Attended the 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue with Russia in New Delhi.**  
**It was a great pleasure to discuss and exchange opinion on certain significant issues of common interest.**  
**We look forward to the Summit meeting to be held later in the evening. [pic.twitter.com/KvLCyPFFld](https://pic.twitter.com/KvLCyPFFld)**  
**— Rajnath Singh (@rajnathsingh) December 6, 2021**

On the S-400 deal and the US threat of sanctions, Lavrov said the deal does not only have “symbolic meaning”, but is a “very important practical, meaningful” addition to “Indian defence capability”.

“The deal is being implemented. We witness attempts on the part of the United States to undermine this cooperation and to make India obey the American orders to follow the American vision of how this region should be developed. And now Indian friends clearly and firmly explained that they are a sovereign country and they will decide on whose weapons to buy and who is going to be a partner of India in this and other areas,” he said.

India and Russia signed 28 agreements, including 9 government-to-government agreements and those that spanned areas of defence, space, finance, power, culture, scientific research, education and health among others.

The two sides could not conclude the reciprocal logistics support agreement (RELOS). Foreign Secretary Harsh Vardhan Shringla said it was being “put off” for the time being since there were some issues pending.

“The Sides recognized the requirement of an institutional arrangement for reciprocal provision of logistic support and services for the Armed Forces,” the joint statement said.

While there was a discussion on the eastern Ladakh border situation at the 2+2 meeting, the Russian side briefed India on developments pertaining to the Ukrainian situation, Shringla said.

The two sides also discussed the Indo-Pacific strategy and Delhi conveyed its security concerns in the region.