
CROATIA IN TALKS WITH SWEDEN, U.S. ON FIGHTER JETS - MINISTER

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Croatia is in talks with Sweden and the United States on buying fighter jets to modernise its air force, Defence Minister Damir Krsticevic said on Thursday.

Zagreb was close to striking a deal on buying a squadron of used and refitted F-16 fighter jets from Israel, but eventually Israel informed Croatia it could not sell the planes as it could not secure an approval from the United States.

Israel had been in competition with several countries bidding for Zagreb's business and its most serious competitor was reported to have been Sweden's SAAB offering new Gripen planes. "The government is still determined to solve (this) strategic issue. We are in talks with Sweden and the United States and we will timely inform the public once we will have some concrete information," Krsticevic told reporters.

Croatia joined the NATO alliance in 2009 and the European Union in 2013. Its air force has a squadron of Russian-made MiG-21 jets dating from its past within old Yugoslavia, but they are outdated and only a few are operational at the moment.

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