AIRBUS SEES CHINA OVERTAKING US IN CIVIL HELICOPTER BUYING

News / Manufacturer



Airbus Helicopters, the top player in China's civil helicopter market, believes China will surpass the United States to be the world's biggest civil helicopter market soon?and aims to increase its market share from the current 40 percent to 60 percent by 2020.

"The Chinese civil (helicopter) market might be the biggest one in the world in 2018 for light single and light twin helicopters and definitely before 2020," said Norbert Ducrot, president and CEO of Airbus Helicopters China.

"With the further opening up of the Chinese low-attitude airspace and the increasing growth in the civil and parapublic segments, China is gearing up to be the biggest market for helicopters in years to come," he said.

The parapublic sector is composed of a wide range of public missions that include police use, medical evacuation, search and rescue, use by utility companies and firefighting.

The helicopter maker is set to build its first ever final assembly line in China. It signed an

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agreement on Monday with a Chinese consortium to form an industrial partnership to launch an H135 helicopter final assembly line in Qingdao, Shandong province.

The consortium is made up of China Aviation Supplies Holding Company, Qingdao United General Aviation Industrial Development Company and CITIC Offshore Helicopter Co Ltd.

The move fulfilled the commitment of purchasing 100 H135s, which are worth about 700 million euros ($788 million), signed in the letter of intent last year between the consortium and Airbus Helicopters. The order of 100 H135s will be assembled in China over the next 10 years.

The assembly line is expected to start operations by 2018, to assemble up to 300 H135s over the next 10 years, said Ducrot, who estimated an output of 1,000 to 1,200 H135s in the coming 20 years.

Airbus sees China overtaking US in civil helicopter buying

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According to the agreement, a joint venture between Airbus Helicopters and the consortium will be established soon. Airbus Helicopters will hold "more than 50 percent of the shares," said Ducrot.

The consortium will also be Airbus Helicopter's biggest distributor in China, as it has ordered 100 H135s.

Last month, the State Council released a regulation about the development of the country's general aviation industry. It set several goals by 2020, including 1 trillion yuan ($151 billion) market value for the sector and 500 airports from the current 300.

The new regulation opened up more areas up for civil use, expanded their use in disaster relief, environmental monitoring and resource exploration. The regulation also allowed for promotion of research and increased manufacturing in the sector.

The number of helicopters in China now stands at around 750. Over the past five years the market has seen an annual sales of about 100 helicopters. Ducrot said the country will need another

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5,000 to 10,000 helicopters and private jets in the foreseeable future.

Airbus sold 40 helicopters in China last year. The company plans to sell over 60 this year. Ducrot said within next week, the order book for the first six months will stand at more than 45 units.

15 JUNE 2016

SOURCE: CHINA DAILY
ARTICLE LINK:
https://ut.50skyshades.com/news/manufacturer/airbus-sees-china-overtaking-us-in-civil-helicopter-buying

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