IRAN TO BUILD CIVIL HELICOPTERS IN JOINT VENTURE WITH RUSSIA

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Iran’s Development and Renovation Organization (IDRO) and Russian Helicopters Company plan to team up to assemble light Russian helicopters in the Islamic Republic, IDRO’s deputy director Abolfazl Kiani Bakhtiari announced.

Mr. Bakhtiari said that apart from the Russian Ka-226 and Ansat light multirole helicopters the Iranians would also assemble their own Saba-248 cargo and passenger rotorcraft. The Saba can also be used in search-and-rescue missions, exploratory mapping, and also as a “flying taxi.”

In an interview with Sputnik Persian, military expert Mikhail Khodaryonok said that such cooperation would benefit both sides, especially Russia’s helicopter industry, which has recently suffered a drop in orders.

“Russia’s helicopter-making industry will certainly stand to gain from this, especially when it comes to heavy-lift helicopters. This is a window of opportunity that will help Russian Helicopters to improve its financial situation. This would also be beneficial to our industry as a whole, above all the fledgling production of the Ansat helicopters,” Khodaryonok added.

When asked about the impact the standing US sanctions could have on this cooperation, Mikhail Khodaryonok noted that much depends on the type of engines these helicopters would be using.

“Some of these [engines] could possibly fall under [the US] sanctions,” he said.

In December 2016, Iran's Minister of Industry Mohammad Reza Nematzadeh said that Tehran is ready to establish a joint venture to assemble Russian helicopters in the country, as the country needs advanced Russian rotorcraft.

The Ansat, a multipurpose light twin-engine turbine helicopter, can be used to carry goods and passengers, as well as used for surveillance, search and rescue missions, and medical evacuation.

The Ka-226 light multirole helicopter has a maximum takeoff weight of 3.6 metric tons and is capable of transferring a payload of up to one ton. The helicopter could be used for passenger and cargo missions, medical evacuations and intensive care, and search and rescue operations.

The Saba-248, unveiled in March, 2017 and designed and built by Iran's Helicopter Renovation and Logistics Company, is a skid-equipped twin-engine, four-bladed utility helicopter meant for use by the Iranian armed forces for troop and cargo transportation, battlefield liaison, casualty evacuation, search and rescue, and observation and reconnaissance.

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