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China-made private aircraft to take off in Laos

GOV.cn Monday, December 21, 2009

China will deliver eight domestically designed private business aircraft to Laos next year, in its latest effort to find a niche in the international aviation market.

The Xiaoying 500, or "Eaglet 500," passed dynamic tests of seat and restraint systems Monday, indicating the first China-made light aircraft had met international standards and was ready for export, said sources with the designer in [Xi'an](#), capital of northwestern [Shaanxi](#) Province.

The single-engine, five-seater aircraft was jointly developed by domestic institutions, including the [Shijiazhuang](#) Aircraft Industry Co. Ltd. in [Hebei](#) Province, the Xi'an-based No. 1 Aircraft Designing Institute affiliated to China Aviation Industry Corporation (AVIC), and the Civil Aviation Flight Institute.

It was granted an airworthiness certificate by the Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC) in 2005.

The general-purpose light aircraft could fly at 300 kilometers per hour and reach an altitude of 4,200 meters. It could take off and land from small airports or, if necessary, highways, said Cui Bingfeng, a press official with the No. 1 Aircraft Designing Institute.

An agreement was reached between the manufacturer, the Shijiazhuang Aircraft Industry Co. Ltd. and China National Aero-Technology Import & Export Corporation (CATIC) in September to deliver eight aircraft to Laos next year.

The Xiaoying 500 sells for 2.2 million to 2.9 million yuan (322,182 to 424,694 U.S. dollars) each, at least 20 percent cheaper than similar products on the international market, he said.

Fourteen aircraft had been delivered to domestic users so far and another 50 would be rolled out next year to meet the growing domestic demand, said Cui.

It is estimated the number of private planes will increase from 11 in 2006 to 2,000 in 2020.

Liu Wanming, deputy director of CAAC's transport department, said in October that his organization encouraged overseas investment in general aviation companies and supported individual ownership of private jets.

China's low-altitude airspace is controlled by the Air Force and the CAAC. Private flights need approval, each time, and the procedure takes at least half a day, making a private flight a less than enticing event.

This year, the authorities made Guangdong Province and the northeast region trial sites for opening the use of airspace below 1,000 meters.

If successful, this will lead to the gradual opening of low-level airspace to private aircraft across the country.

Editor: An Lu

Source: Xinhua