

Russian Helicopters Get American Hoses

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New Mi-17 choppers are being made with hoses from Eaton's German plant, while older craft could be upgraded.

The world's most produced helicopters are adding an important improvement thanks to U.S. manufacturer Eaton.

The Mi-8 and Mi-17 models, which Russian Helicopters supplies domestically and around the world, from now on will feature more durable and robust hoses made of Teflon, a material that has largely replaced rubber in the global aircraft industry.

Rubber hoses made in Russia aren't as good as they could be, said Yury Lebedev, head of aerospace projects for Eaton in Russia.

"Several technologies that are required for rubber hose production were lost in recent years," he said.

The helicopter deal is part of the effort that Eaton, a diversified industrial manufacturer, is

making to gain a larger presence on the Russian market.

Eaton is selling Teflon hoses and fittings for them to Russian Helicopters, which began final assembly at a plant in Tomilino, near Moscow, in June using equipment supplied by Eaton.

The U.S. company handed over the technology free of charge, Lebedev said.

The 10 Mi-17 helicopters that the United States has the option to purchase for Afghanistan by 2016 will likely have the improved hoses, he said.

"They will have a long and successful lifespan," Lebedev said with a smile.

Russian Helicopters has already delivered 21 rotorcraft ordered by the Pentagon for the Afghan security forces.

Russian Helicopters could eventually supply Teflon hoses for its choppers that are currently in service worldwide, Lebedev said.

"We will do our best to help them," he said.

There are about 2,000 rotorcraft of this type used in more than 100 countries, according to Lebedev and Roman Kirillov, a spokesman for Russian Helicopters.

The helicopter maker is aiming to design and produce Teflon hoses for its Kamov models as well, Kirillov said.

The supplies to Russian Helicopters will account for a fraction of Eaton's global Teflon hose business, but the volume will make a difference for the plant in Germany where they originate, Lebedev said.

Eaton is looking to do more business with Russian Helicopters.

"We are trying to show them other technologies that are used in the West and could bring value to their customers," Lebedev said.

TECHNOLOGICAL LEAPS

Eaton is also a partner of Russian aerospace company Irkut in designing hydraulic systems for its future passenger jet MC-21. As with other partners in the MC-21 project, Eaton's goal is to make the systems lighter and less energy-intensive, Lebedev said.

As an example, he cited the engine that U.S. manufacturer Pratt & Whitney designed for the jet using new technology to cut fuel consumption by at least 15 percent.

"It's difficult to achieve this type of technological leap in the industry," Lebedev said.

"Aviation is quite a conservative industry, where safety is the most important thing."

Plans call for the first commercial delivery of the 150 to 212-seat jet to take place in 2017.

NON-STOP POWER SUPPLY

Aside from hoses, Eaton sells "several million dollars" worth of uninterruptible power supply units in Russia, said country manager Igor Anufriev.

The market is growing rapidly, driven by expanding numbers of Internet users and adoption of more information technology in business, he said.

Banks, telecom operators and government agencies will set up new data centers to handle the increased traffic, and the equipment will require protection from the power supply that's often prone to sudden cutoffs, surges and dips.

"It's going to be a huge market," he said. "And it won't stop at that."

Anufriev estimated the company is one of the leaders on this \$500 million market in Russia. About half of UPSs are sold to data centers, while the rest are going to offices and a small percent to individual homes.

Eaton also sells power management equipment for industrial enterprises, power stations and contractors of commercial and residential construction — a growing market with current sales of \$2.8 billion to \$3.1 billion annually. In this segment, it competes with foreign suppliers including France's Schneider Electric and Germany's Siemens.

CAR PARTS

Eaton is doing a brisk business selling spare parts for U.S. and German trucks, Freightliner and MAN, respectively, which arrived here before import duties on this type of vehicle surged in 2009. Anufriev described the sales as worth "several million dollars" a year.

Eaton's car-related exports to Russia also include elements of the transmission, such as gearboxes. In addition, it sells plastic and composite parts for engine pans and other car parts.

As the world's largest producer of engine valves, the company is also negotiating supplies of such components to both Russian and foreign carmakers here, he said. It is hoping to sign contracts by the end of this year, he said.

Eventually, Eaton could produce the valves locally if demand grows enough to ensure an acceptable return on the investment, Anufriev said.

In a separate possible deal, the company is in talks with billionaire Oleg Deripaska's GAZ, a producer of light commercial vehicles, to sell differentials. They may sign a contract by the end of this year, Anufriev said.

WTO DISMISSED

Eaton doesn't stand to gain much from Russia's entry to the WTO, which will in the course of a few years reduce import duties on the type of goods that Eaton makes by 3 percent to 7 percent, Anufriev said.

"We operate on the upscale market and don't compete with Russian companies," he said.

"The effect for us won't be too large."

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