

KAI President Chung Emphasizes State-of-the-Art Quality Take-off as Airplane Exporter

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President Hae, Joo Chung
Korea Aerospace Industries, Ltd.

President & CEO of Korea Aerospace Industries, Ltd. (KAI) Hae Joo Chung announced that Korea should be able to export more than 1,000 units of its advanced supersonic trainer (T-50) after successful mass production, considering the trends of competitor aircraft like Hawk.

In a recent interview with Maeil Business Newspaper on the occasion of the roll-out of the T-50 (Golden Eagle) Unit 1 on August 30, Chung predicted that Korea would become the world's sixth supersonic aircraft exporter following the United States, Russia, the U.K., France and Sweden.

President Chung also stressed that according to a survey conducted by U.S. market specialist Teal Group the global T-50-class market for the next 25 years would reach about 3,300 units, and among the competitors the T-50 is expected to take at least 30% of the market, or 1,000 units.

At present, KAI is in the final stage of export discussions with the U.A.E. and is also proceeding with basic export negotiations with Greece after conclusion of an MOU for pre-examination of functions required by the Greek Air Force. A related official at KAI disclosed, "Greece's need for new trainers is very urgent, as all its existing trainers will have to be replaced within two years." He added that KAI is endeavoring to export 30~40 units of T-50 aircraft to Greece.

KAI believes that if the projected exports are achieved, Greece will become an outpost for advance into the European market, as there is a strong possibility that the T-50 may be adopted as a standard aircraft type for Europe. The price of T-50 is at about the 25-billion-won level. Therefore, if export contracts are realized, it will likely produce the momentum to grow Korea's aerospace industries dramatically.

President Chung forecast that KAI will achieve this year's order target of 2.5 trillion won without difficulty, owing to the conclusion of a contract with U.S. Bell for joint development of the '429 helicopter' in February this year and also to the securing of a project to improve the functions of the P-3 (naval patrol) aircraft.

"A total of 2.1 trillion won was invested in the development of the T-50 over the past 10 years, but we were able to save US\$900 million of the defense budget compared with direct purchase of the aircraft," said President Chung. He is confident that after the functions of T-50's radar, engine, etc., in particular, are improved, Korea will likely be considered for the replacement of thousands of lightweight fighters around the world with the T-50 in a short period.

