

Bell Helicopter identifies China as strongest growth market



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World's leading aircraft producer Bell Helicopter has identified China as its strongest market for growth and plans to grow facilities and services in the country that requires about 2000 choppers in the coming years.

"We are mapping out the service network together with Chinese partners, trying to make a solid foundation to ensure our market can go forward," said John Garrison, president and CEO with Bell helicopter said today at Zhuhai Air Show in China.

"We think China will be one of the strongest potential growth markets in the world. Clearly, the government will continue to open up low-altitude airspace, and regulations will be important for the entire industry," he told state-run Xinhua news agency.

Bell Helicopter has signed a memorandum of understanding (MOU) to assist with the establishment of a maintenance training facility for Bell 206L and 407 helicopters in Guangdong Province.

The MoU will focus on training for the Bell 206L and Bell 407 product lines, and includes access to training course materials, electronic training systems and ongoing support.

It will reinforce Bell Helicopter's commitment to increasing its global customer service and support, said Garrison.

"China is facing unprecedented demand for training, support and products as it moves to expand its aviation infrastructure," Garrison said.

According to recent forecasts, there is a projected need for as many as 2,000 helicopters in the coming decade, which will require thousands of trained professionals to fly and maintain these aircraft to standards.

There is not only an opportunity to help create these jobs, but also ensure China has access to the best operational and technical training possible, he said.

Bell Helicopter predicts market growth in China's general aviation will be 20 to 25 per cent per year.

According to Bell's statistics, only 600 commercial helicopters are supporting 1.3 billion people around China.

There are more than 8,000 helicopters supporting about 300 million people in the US.

Bell Helicopter, a wholly owned subsidiary of Textron Inc, is an industry-leading producer of commercial and military, manned and unmanned vertical-lift aircraft. It operates in 120 countries.

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