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## **China's Engine Aspiration**

CFM International and ACAE in December signed an MOU to build an assembly line in China for a version of the new Leap-X engine to power the C919.

By the time the three examples of the Comac ARJ21 regional jet had accumulated some 220 flight hours by the middle of this month, China had proven that it could assemble and fly an indigenous airplane derived from a Western design. But the country's aspirations to become a global aerospace power will demand more than an ability to adapt already mature Western technology to programs meant almost solely for domestic consumption. Hence, this month's official ground-breaking of a new engine research and development center in Shanghai might have carried more significance to the Chinese than even the considerable publicity surrounding it suggested.

Scheduled for completion in 2013, the new center will serve as the headquarters for AVIC Commercial Aircraft Engine Company (ACAEC), a division of Aviation Industry Corporation of China (AVIC) established last January to engage in engine research, manufacture, final assembly, testing, sales, MRO, service, technological development and consultation. Tempering its lofty aspirations with a characteristic degree of pragmatism, however, the company won't build an engine from scratch right away; rather, under the terms of a memorandum of understanding signed in late December, it first plans to collaborate with CFM International on the Leap-X1C engine, chosen to power the C919, the new Chinese 150-seat narrowbody scheduled to enter service in 2016.

While China's broader aspirations extend beyond the C919 and into the realm of still larger airplanes in the future, it hasn't lost focus on the more immediate goal to certify the ARJ21-700, the engines for which now come from GE's final assembly plant in Durham, N.C. However, GE has entered negotiations with Shenyang Liming Aero Engine Group that could lead to an arrangement to produce GE CF34-10A turbofans for the ARJ21 in China. Speaking with AIN from his office in Cincinnati earlier this month, CF34 program manager Chuck Nugent said that talks have centered on granting responsibility for "some of the assembly activities and final testing," possibly within five years.

By: Gregory Polek from AIN.com

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