
US, Turkey to Build 600 Blackhawks

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Turkey and the U.S. are seeking to sell some 500 "made in Turkey" Blackhawk helicopters to third countries, according to Francis J. Ricciardone, the U.S. ambassador to Ankara. "We will see over 600 Blackhawk helicopters, very high technology helicopters, produced here in Turkey. The great majority of these helicopters will go to third markets, third countries," said Ricciardone during a Turkish-American business council lunch in Istanbul on May 4.

Around one hundred of these helicopters will be used by the Turkish Armed Forces, the ambassador confirmed. U.S. firm Sikorsky Aircraft won a \$3.5 billion competition in April 2011 to lead the production of more than 100 large utility helicopters for Turkey over Italy's AgustaWestland. The defense firm is mainly set to cooperate with local Alp Aviation in production. Along with Alp, Ricciardone said some other important firms would also contribute to the making of the utility helicopters.

Sikorsky also became the first major international company to formally announce it would also seek to win the light utility helicopter contest in May last year. However, no exact date had been decided for the production of Blackhawks, said an Alp Aviation spokesperson.

Possible buyers were also not clear yet, public relations representative Melek Akdoğan told the Hürriyet Daily News during a phone interview on May 4.

Ricciardone also said that the U.S. supported Turkey's ambitious 2023 target to become one of the world's largest 10 economies.

"Yesterday I met with the representatives of Turkey's Economy Ministry and we had talks with more than 70 firms," he said during his speech.

"The ministry found a chance to show them all the opportunities in Turkey," he said.

The envoy also said that Turkey and the U.S. should cooperate more in the fields of defense, technology, information and aerospace, adding that the dynamism in the Turkish economy could be seen by the newly built roads, airports, residences and malls across the country.

(Turkish Daily News)