



Russia May Begin Purchase of Chinese-made Drones, Engines

OE Watch Commentary: There are reports that Russia may soon begin to purchase a wider range of equipment from China. Since the founding of the Chinese Communist Party in the 1920s, China has largely been the recipient of Soviet, and later Russian technical aid and arms sales. Most of China's early aircraft and tanks were transferred from the Soviet Union during the Chinese Civil War and then the Korean War. Many industries were essentially built from the ground up by Soviet technical advisors. The breakup of the Soviet Union however, meant that many important production lines were located in independent countries.

Rebuilding the engineering expertise or relocating these lines (like the Ilyushin aircraft production line in Uzbekistan) back to Russia took its toll on the Russian military industry. The outbreak of war in eastern Ukraine in 2014 and subsequent annexation of Crimea meant that the Ukrainian government was unwilling to sell a large number of engines and parts needed to maintain Russian equipment. The accompanying excerpted article suggests that China may be stepping in to fill some of these gaps. However, China purchases large numbers of engines (especially marine diesels) from Ukraine, which may give the Ukrainians some leverage to limit the sale. Another area where it might make sense for Russia to purchase from China rather than develop its own capability is UAVs.

The article highlights the successes China has had in dominating some niches of the global arms market that would have otherwise likely been dominated by Russia. Chinese companies have offered a range of tactical reconnaissance, attack, and long-endurance drones. Free from sales restrictions that have prevented many customers from purchasing more advanced drones from the US, Chinese UAVs have been popular among countries in the Middle East and Africa. Russia may begin purchases of these drones, though the authors suggest that just as Russia has used various techniques to prevent China from reverse-engineering fighter jets and SAMs, China itself may find it necessary to incorporate such techniques for drones it sells to Russia. **End OE Watch Commentary (Wood)**

“The diesel engines purchased from China have been installed in some light surface ships of the Russian Navy.”

Source: “俄售华苏35做手脚 现想买中国无人机也被技术封锁 (Russia sells China ‘rigged’ Su-35s, Now Wants to Purchase Chinese Drones to Break Technological Blockade),” *Sina Military*, 22 January 2018. <http://mil.news.sina.com.cn/jssd/2018-01-22/doc-ifyquptv8621003.shtml>

A long time ago, China began exporting optical glass to Russia. After polishing by Russian companies, this optical glass was installed in various Russian military equipment. [This is due to the fact that] after the breakup of the Soviet Union the optical industry acquired from Germany after the end of World War II has along since declined.

Now that Russia is importing more Chinese-made weapons and components, Hong Kong media has published an article saying that Western and Ukrainian sanctions and arms embargo against Russia forced Russia to turn to China for aircraft and missile parts, even though in Russia there are doubts about the quality of alternatives made in China.

The article said that Russia may lack other means to purchase weapons and components, especially connectors, pumps and diesel engines. These parts were mainly imported from Ukraine and European countries, but now due to sanctions, Russia has to switch to China. Russian media has reported that these parts are technically backward and there is neither the ability nor the need to invest large amounts of money to produce these parts within Russia.

The diesel engines purchased from China have been installed in some light surface ships of the Russian Navy. Russia's surface warships and wheeled armored vehicles are heavily dependent on imports. Foreign media believe that if Russia intends to restart abandoned or canceled equipment plans, will import marine gas turbines and automotive diesel engines from China. However, imports of Chinese-made marine gas turbines is likely to be obstructed by the Ukrainian side. Chinese marine gas turbines have a deep relationship with Ukraine.

In addition, there are reports that Russia may import Chinese-made drones. Chinese-made drones have been used in many countries and regions, and China has even exported production lines. While their performance is considered to be inferior to U.S. products, compared to Russian drones, Chinese drones are significantly more capable. ...Furthermore, exporting drones not only involves the aircraft and a simple control system, but also a complex set of technological systems. If Russia imports Chinese drones, observers believe that, there will be differences between export and foreign trade variants like the S-400 and Su-35, and technical measures will be taken to avoid being copied. Russia adopted this measure on the Su-35 to prevent propriety secrets of its engine and avionics being cracked.