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Russia sells 21 helicopters to U.S. forces in Afghanistan

Russian arms export corporation Rosoboronexport signed a contract with the U.S. Army Forces Command on supplying 21 Mi-17V5 multipurpose helicopters to Afghanistan, a spokesman for the Russian Federal Service of Military-Technical Cooperation said on Friday.

The United States and Russia have been in talks for more than a year on the deal to provide the much-needed vehicles for the NATO mission in Afghanistan, RIA Novosti reported.

The cost of one helicopter has been agreed earlier at 17.5 million U.S. dollars. The first helicopters will be sent to Afghanistan in October 2011, said the spokesman.

Besides, Russia will also provide the spare parts, ground support equipment and maintenance service.

The Mi-17 is an export version of the Mi-8 Hip helicopter, which can transport up to 37 passengers.

In May 2010, the United States lifted sanctions against Rosoboronexport. The sanctions were imposed in 2006 after the U.S. government accused Rosoboronexport of violating the nuclear nonproliferation regime.

Despite the ban, dozens of Mi-17s have been bought by the United States for Afghanistan and Iraq over the past four years via intermediaries to avoid direct contacts with Rosoboronexport.

Source: Xinhua



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