



CESSNA CARAVAN POWERS AHEAD IN CHINA

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Textron Aviation is enjoying success with its Shijiazhuang factory for the Cessna Caravan 208 single-engined turboprop, with the type attaining acceptance in the Chinese market.

Bill Schultz, country manager of Textron Aviation in China, says there are about 77 Caravans operating in China, of which 30 were produced in Shijiazhuang.

The factory is run as a joint venture between Cessna and state-owned airframer AVIC. Schultz says working with AVIC has allowed for far greater access to the market owing to its deep connections across China.

The assembly line in Shijiazhuang, which employs about 60 production staff, takes kits produced in Wichita and completes them. Completed aircraft are flown out from a private airfield next to the factory.

Schultz declined to comment on annual production numbers or the backlog for the factory, but says it is making sufficient progress to warrant increasing work share.

This means that increasingly complex production processes will be transferred to Shijiazhuang. He does not foresee an entire, independent line in Shijiazhuang, however.

He attributes some of the Caravan's acceptance in China to regional governments' efforts to connect remote communities. In Inner Mongolia, for example, Caravans are used as feeder aircraft to outlying areas.

In addition, Caravans equipped with floats could be used to reach islands in China's littoral domain.

Private uses include aerial tourism. Textron is also in talks with a company that plans to equip a

Caravan with skies. This aircraft will ferry passengers to a hotel located near the site of the 2022 winter Olympics, which will take place near Beijing.

Schultz also touched on the company's Citation XLS+ production centre in Zhuhai. For the time being the facility is engaged in painting completed aircraft and doing some cabin work. China's lacklustre private jet market, however, means that this facility is unlikely to get more workshare for the time being.

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