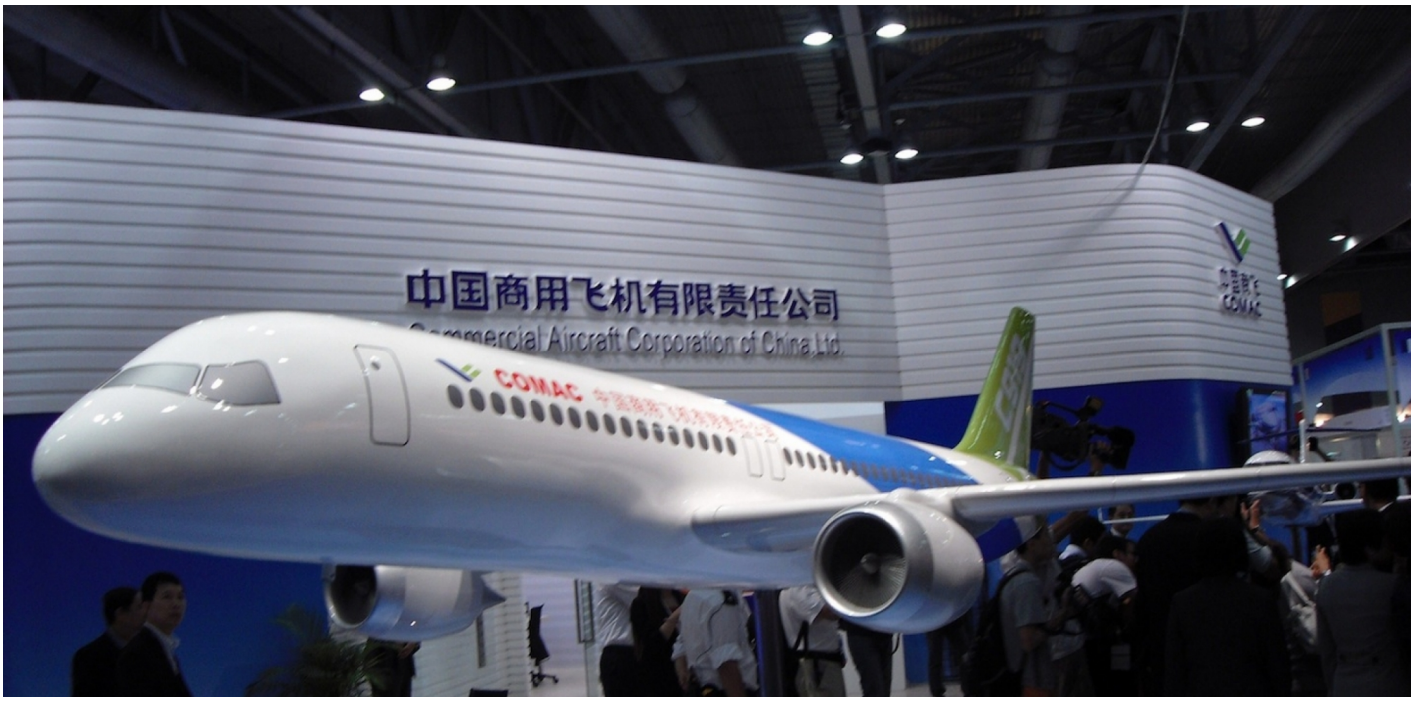
CHINA TO UNVEIL NARROW-BODY JET, SHOWCASING AEROSPACE AMBITIONS

News / Manufacturer



China is poised to unveil a prototype of its first homegrown passenger jet that it hopes will compete with airliners from Boeing Co. and Airbus Group SE, setting the stage for the plane's first flight.

Commercial Aircraft Corp. of China, also known as COMAC, will roll out its single-aisle C919 airliner Monday at its factory in Shanghai. The plane's first test flight has been pushed back until next year.

China is focused on developing its homegrown aerospace industry as part of a broader plan to elevate its economy into the ranks of advanced industrialized nations by 2020. The C919, with a capacity for 168 passengers, aims to challenge the dominance of the Airbus A320 and Boeing 737 in the market for planes with more than 100 seats. Comac has received more than 500 purchase commitments for the plane but nearly all are from Chinese customers, reflecting a shortage of overseas orders.

Loftier Ambitions

China's aerospace ambitions go beyond the C919. Comac and Russia's United Aircraft Corp. are aiming to sign an accord by the end of this year to build a wide-body plane together.

The partnership with Russia could eventually grow to include the development of an engine. China is keen to develop its own engine for the C919, which initially will be powered by a version of the LEAP engine developed by CFM International Inc., a joint venture between GE Aviation LLC and a

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division of France's Safran SA.

As part of its engine drive, China is considering a plan to pull various assets related to aerospace engines into a single company, according to people familiar with the matter. The plan is still in the initial stages and straddles multiple ministries. As part of the restructuring, Aviation Industry Corp. of China may end control over AVIC Heavy Machinery and AVIC Aviation Engine, the two listed companies said in separate statements.

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