South Korea to Field New Tactical Drones from Korean-Air

Under the contract with the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) signed last year, Korean Air will mass-produce the reconnaissance drones from 2016 to 2020

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The new tactical drone developed by Korean Air has a length of 3.4 meters and a wingspan of 4.2 meters. It is designed for short, automatic takeoff and landing, deploying from a short runway of 30 meters, and landing on wheels, skids, or parachute. Photo: Korean Air

Korean Air Lines Co. announced it has signed a 400 billion-won (US$333.5 million) deal with the the Korean military procurement agency to mass-produce reconnaissance unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) as part of the government's plan to build up its aerial mission capability. Under the contract with the Defense Acquisition Program Administration (DAPA) signed last year, Korean Air will mass-produce the reconnaissance drones from 2016 to 2020, the company said. The new order followed a successful completion of the test and evaluation program in 2014. The order covers procurements over five years with first deliveries expected in 2018. The company considers central asia and latin america as a potential export market for the new system.

The tactical drone has a length of 3.4 meters and a wingspan of 4.2 meters. It is designed for short, automatic, short takeoff and landing with steep descent, characteristic of operations in mountainous areas, where it can deploy from a 30 meter runways, landing on wheels, skids, or parachute (emergency recovery).

The new drone is capable of operating for 24 hour missions. the main payload is an electro-optical sensor payload enabling observation range of 10 km, equipped with automatic target tracking capability. Other drones already developed by the company since 2007 include the KUS-7 close-range UAV and a small tactical UAV known as KUS-9, designed with blended wing-body configuration. While previous Korean developed drones are increasing the use of domestically produced subsystems, the new drone is based almost entirely on indigenously systems, only 5 percent of its content are imported, the company said.