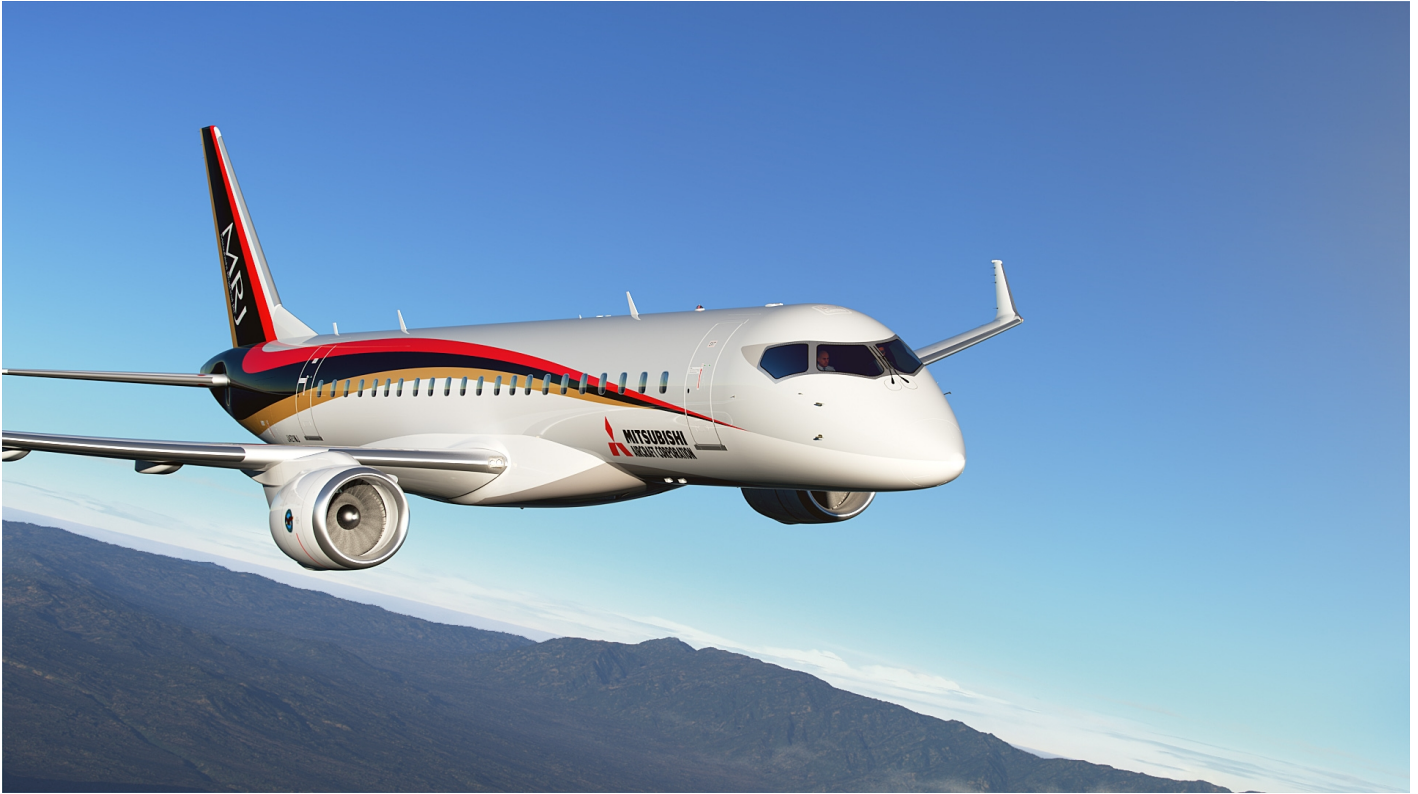




MITSUBISHI'S REGIONAL JET SETS SIGHTS ON US SKIES

News / Manufacturer



With the **Mitsubishi Regional Jet's** maiden trial flight completed, the groundwork is being laid to make a push in the crucial **U.S.** market.

Mitsubishi Aircraft is preparing five test planes, seeking to gain clearance for commercial operation by the spring of 2017. Four of these planes will be taken to the U.S. next summer. The country's wide expanses and the availability of long runways allow for more test flights in a day than in Japan.

The test planes are expected to log 2,500 hours in the air. The U.S. is also home to many engineers equipped to analyze flight data. The Mitsubishi Heavy Industries unit has established a test center in Seattle, the core manufacturing hub for Boeing, with an eye toward hiring 100 local engineers. Another 50 will be sent from Japan.

"We will intensively analyze the data related to the control systems and engine, helping to polish the final product," says Senior Executive Vice President Nobuo Kishi.

Demand for regional jets is projected to exceed 5,000 over the next 20 years, with the U.S. accounting for 35% of the market. The head of Mitsubishi Aircraft's U.S. unit hails from Mitsui & Co and served as president of an aircraft leasing company there. The ability to lease the MRJ would provide access to financially weaker carriers, leading to more orders.

The first test flight on Nov. 11 has been followed by two more without problems. But with the first delivery scheduled for the April-June quarter of 2017, Mitsubishi Aircraft President Hiromichi Morimoto acknowledges that time is tight.

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