

Volvo Set to Export First China-made Car to US

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A file photo of Volvo's S60L. [File photo: cheyun.com]



Volvo is planning to export its "Made in China" cars to the United States, a step forward for Beijing's ambitions to extend the global reach of the auto manufacturing industry.

CRI's Huang Shan reports.

On the verge of exporting the first "Made in China" cars to the United States, Volvo aims to show that they are as good as the vehicles it produces in Europe.

The S60 Inscription, based on Volvo's S60L is the vehicle due to be exported from southwest China's Chengdu.

This version is designed for China and an extra three inches of rear seat legroom for buyers who have passengers riding in the back.

To meet safety standards, every vehicle that rolls off Volvo's assembly line in Chengdu needs to go through a five-hour battery of tests on a driving track.

Once a month, which is three times as often as in Europe, Volvo tears apart a finished car to examine the quality of welds and other work.

The Senior Vice President in Charge of China for Volvo Car Group, Lars Danielsson, expresses his confidence in the cars.

"This is a Volvo car coming out of the Volvo production system and it's a lot of credibility into that. I think the US customers really trust us on what we have built up over a long period of time. Of course we have no intention to risk that. We cannot afford it. Then we also are confident about the quality level produced out of this plant."

The move is a new step up in Volvo Car Corp.'s campaign to establish itself as a global luxury brand following its 2010 acquisition by Chinese automaker Geely.

To the Chairman of Geely Holdings Li Shufu, it is also important to win the global market.

"We have to explore the global market, and exporting products from China to the US is part of the

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endeavor. Volvo has to realize the localization of research, manufacturing and purchasing and recruiting. In our global layout we have to realize the localization globally."

Currently, a handful of China's young but ambitious auto brands are planning to export to the United States or Western Europe.

The managing director of Gaofeng Advisory Company, Bill Russo, says that provided the cars are of good quality, the location of the factory is not a problem for US consumers

"I don't think US consumers have a problem with buying cars or anything made in China. It's a market that's rather indifferent to the point of origin. We buy Apple products - they're all made in China. And that doesn't diminish the equity of the brand of Apple. So I think the issue of made in China is largely perception, of quality, but the reality is that internationally branded products made in China are made to the same standards as they would be manufactured anywhere else in the world."

Volvo expects to send about 5,000 units per year to the United States. In June, the first U.S.-bound S60 Inscriptions will be shipped to Shanghai, then across the Pacific to the United States.

For CRI, I'm Huang Shan.



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