

New Lightweight Jet To Be Built by U.S.

Washington, Feb. 10 (AP)—The United States today endorsed designs for a new lightweight all purpose supersonic fighter that could give Allied nations modern air defense at prices they could afford.

The plane would be intended primarily for the air forces of smaller nations.

The U.S. Air Force said in a brief announcement that it shortly will begin contract negotiations with Northrop Corp. for a program to develop a lightweight multi-purpose jet fighter for possible utilization by Allied countries.

Known as the N-156F, it is a twin engined jet featuring high performance, and economy of operation and maintenance.

Northrop Corp. of Hawthorne, Cal., has been developing the single-seat plane capable of flying at more than 1,000 miles an hour.

Gilbert Nettleton, vice-president and general manager of Northrop's international division, said the N-156F would become operationally available in the 1961-1965 period.

"This is the first time a U.S. plane has been developed with the requirements of our Allies primarily in mind," Mr. Nettleton told a reporter.

Nations that have expressed interest in the proposed fighter include Japan, Australia, Canada and several of the North Atlantic Treaty nations of Europe.