

Il-96-400 vs Boeing 777F

Russian Il-96-400 freighter has got a serious rival as Boeing 777F cargo airplane entered commercial service last week. Definitive contracts for 78 777F units have been already signed with first deliveries due to Air France.

Russia's Aeroflot-Cargo considers placing an order for the newest American airliner, too, as it intends to have renewed its freighter fleet by 2015.

Aeroflot-Cargo is facing a difficult choice: on the one hand, the company is considering acquisition of the new American airliners; on the other, it is bound by an agreement of delivery of six Il-96-400 planes with three units due by the end of 2008.

The Boeing 777F freighter has a host of strength features. With more than 100 tons of payload capacity and a 347 tons takeoff weight, this twin-engine fuel-efficient freighter will fly 9,000 kilometers.

The Russian four-engine freighter's payload capacity is 92 tons with a maximum range of only 5,500 kilometers.

With this in mind, Aeroflot-Cargo and Ilyushin Finance will likely have tensed negotiations shortly.

Meanwhile, the Russian aircraft has one very important advantage, the price. Boeing-777F is valued at around \$250 million at list prices, while Il-96-400 costs around \$62 million.

Taking into account the difference in prices, Aeroflot-Cargo may select the Russian-made freighters, all the more so because the Russian government will likely insist on the deal seeking to support the domestic aircraft industry.

Yet, with their strong advantages, Boeing-777F airplanes can be seen as competitors to Il-96-400 cargo planes on the Russian market. Volga-Dnieper, one of the largest air carriers, is going to renew and upgrade its freighter fleet.

To uphold its position on the domestic market and enhance competitiveness of the Il-96-400 freighter, the maker should select NK-93 engines (designed by Samara-based Kuznetsov Research and Technology Plant) to power the newest 96-400 plane. With these engines, fuel consumption can be reduced by 10-20% and a greater thrust (20-22 with NK-93 against 17.5 with PS90) will increase the payload capacity and range.

By Kirill Lebedev