

NEW RUSSIAN AIRCRAFT INTENDS TO REPLACE THE B737 MAX



In the middle of Boeing 737 MAX crisis, Russia prepares to introduce the Irkut MC-21 with a capacity of up to 160 passengers.

Airbus and China aren't the only ones testing the troubled waters of the B737 MAX crisis. **Russia is preparing to introduce the Irkut MC-21, a narrow-body Russian aircraft with a capacity and flight autonomy similar to the Boeing plane.**

This aircraft, developed by the United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) in 2006, was scheduled to be launched commercially in 2012. After a long delay, the project was reactivated and the new date for commercial flights is 2020, as soon as it obtains its certificate of conformity.

This year, at the Moscow International Aviation and Space Show (MAKS 2019) the Irkut MC-21 will have its debut in society. It is preceded by several successful test flights. The last was carried out last Saturday, performed by the third Russian aircraft that left the UAC factory.

The Russian government is determined to propel this plane to the sky. Denis Manturov, Minister of Trade and Industry and Commerce, said that the unveiling of the new Russian aircraft will show "potential customers and future passengers one of the greatest advances in the Russian aviation industry, with an unprecedented level of comfort".

Production of this Russian aircraft was slowed down by US trade sanctions, which cut off the supply of composite materials necessary for the manufacture of the plane's wings.

Due to this, the UAC factory could only finish six aircrafts, and if it wanted to increase its production, it would have to develop its own industry of this type of materials.

In the entire world, not a single B737 MAX can take fly until the reasons for the Ethiopian accident are clarified. The future of more than 500 billion euros in purchase orders for this model also depends on the results of the investigations.

Airbus took advantage of this situation to promote its A320neo and A321, a more traditional competitor in the narrow-body and short to medium-range aircraft segment.

Even China sees a key opportunity to boost its Comac C919, which should start commercial flights in 2020, and already stating that they have 800 purchase orders, most from airlines in the same country.

As a matter of fact, the Russian UAC is working with Comac to develop the C929, a wide-body model

that could make long-haul flights, such as a Beijing–New York route.

The MC–21 must face all these rivals in the ring of aeronautics. The Russian manufacturer has two models in its catalog: the MC–21–200 and the MC–21–300.

The first has a capacity for 132 passengers, and flight autonomy of 6,400 kilometers; while the second model allows up to 163 passengers to a distance of 6,000 kilometers.

Both models of the MC–21 have a capacity and flight autonomy similar to the infamous Boeing 737 MAX.

The –300 is the closest on performance to the B737 MAX–8 and 9. But where these aircraft have potential is the maximum takeoff weight (MTOW), which is 72 tons in the case of the –200, 8 tons less than the smallest of the Boeing series. This data is relevant for low-cost airlines, which look for the maximum possible savings in their operations.

But in case that purchase orders do follow through, the Russian manufacturer will have to change its production scheme because it currently has the infrastructure to finish 10 aircrafts the first year, and 20 in the following one.

The UAC claims that it already has 175 purchase orders, of which 50 correspond to Aeroflot, the largest airline of the Russian Federation. The company canceled orders of 20 Boeing 737 MAX for Pobeda, its low-cost subsidiary while being pressured by the Russian government to incorporate more MC–21 planes into its fleet.

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