

RUSSIA ABANDONED A 400-SEAT PASSENGER AIRCRAFT PROJECT



The Russian company United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), which had plans to manufacture a four-engine Ilyushin with a capacity of 400 passengers, has scrapped the idea after no airline showed interest in the passenger aircraft model.

A couple of decades ago, a four-engine plane meant power, safety, and confidence in taking over a market, but nowadays it is seen as an old-fashioned idea.

The concern of governments and airlines to reduce carbon emissions have put an end to the four-engine models, from the gigantic A380 and B747, to the A340 or the older B707 and B727.

That is why the UAC decided to abandon the mass production of the Il-96-400, a double-aisle plane with four engines that aspired to break into a market dominated by Boeing and Airbus.

Russian media was so enthusiastic about the project and its possibilities that it had dubbed the Ilyushin as “the Boeing killer”, says aviation news outlet Aerotime. However, no airline showed interest in buying it.

More Than 400 Passengers

The Il-96-400 is a longer and updated version of the Il-96-300, a passenger aircraft that has been in production since 1993.

The new model, as its name suggests, was adjusted to carry up to 402 passengers in a single class; although it also allowed cabins for three classes (with a capacity of 305 passengers) or two classes (up to 350 seats).

The maximum range would have been 8,750 km, although Russian engineers also considered improving performance so that it could fly up to 10,000 km. Even so, these numbers fall short compared to the 16,300 km for Airbus’ A350, and 14,700 km for Boeing's 777ER.

Another point against the Russian model compared to the largest manufacturers was the fact that the future Ilyushin would have needed three crew members in the flight deck.

Two Single Planes

Even though the project was halted, this does not mean that it has been completely abandoned. According to Russian media, there are two models that will be finished and delivered to Rossiya Airlines, and will be used to fly high-ranking government officials.

There was also a variant of the model designed as a cargo aircraft, the Il-96-400T, which shares much of its technology with the passenger model.

Designing the Il-96-400 was a longer process than expected. The first steps were taken in

2015, but the delays ended up shutting down the project.

By the time there was a prospect of finishing the aircraft and making test flights (scheduled for 2023) the world had already changed its mind on these types of aircraft: now, no airline is interested in having a heavier aircraft that pollutes more and cannot fly as far as its competitors.

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