

Sukhoi Sells 6 Superjets to U.S. Firm

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A Superjet flying at Britain's Farnborough International Airshow on July 20. **Simon Dawson**

Sukhoi has broken into the coveted U.S. aircraft market with its new Superjet 100, winning an order for six jets and an option for four more that could be worth \$300 million, a spokesman for SuperJet International said Friday.

U.S.-based Willis Lease Finance Corporation signed a memorandum of understanding with SuperJet International to purchase six of the regional planes in the 98-seat configuration, with first delivery in September 2012. Willis Lease also has an option to buy four additional planes.

SuperJet International is a joint venture between Italy's Alenia Aeronautica, with 51 percent, and the Sukhoi holding.

"This is an important deal for the company and the Russian aircraft industry as a whole, since it gives an opportunity to attract more customers in the future, both from the U.S. and other countries," said Giacomo Perfetto, a spokesman for SuperJet International.

"The agreement with this major U.S. leasing company confirms the increasing interest of international customers for the Sukhoi Superjet 100, which is certainly the rising star in the 100-seat aircraft market," he said by telephone from Italy.

The Russian-designed plane relies heavily on imported components and has faced a number of delays. Originally slated for delivery in late 2008, Sukhoi now plans to hand over its first planes in the fourth quarter.

The company hopes to have European Union certification completed next year.

Analysts said the Superjet was attractive for international carriers, since it has a number of advantages over models of the current market leaders — Canada's Bombardier and Brazil's Embraer.

"The models of both jet makers don't fully meet the airlines' requirements. That's why a number of carriers are considering an opportunity to renovate their regional aircraft fleets with a new generation of jets," said Oleg Panteleyev, editor of Aviaport, an industry information agency.

But international carriers will likely wait to see how state-run Aeroflot — Sukhoi's anchor customer, with 30 Superjet orders — handles the new jet before ordering planes for their own fleets, Panteleyev said.

Aeroflot has ordered the planes to replace its Tu-134 jets at a discounted price of \$21 million, which was later increased to \$22.4 million because of additional equipment expenses.

Sukhoi signed orders for 60 planes at the Farnborough International Airshow in July, including those with Indonesian carrier Kartika Airlines, bringing its order book to 161.

Mikhail Pogosyan, head of the state-run Sukhoi holding, said at the show that 800 Superjets would be built by 2029, accounting for 15 percent of the global market for regional planes.

Willis Lease hopes to "benefit from attractive financing alternatives and take a leading role in introducing this innovative aircraft to our global customer base," president Charles Willis said in a statement.

The U.S. company did not say whether it had found customers for the jets or in what market it planned to lease them. Panteleyev said Willis Lease might be planning to lease them in other markets, since Sukhoi is not planning to seek U.S. certification in the near future.

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