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Antonov Promises 2 New Planes

By The Moscow Times

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Kiev-based plane maker Antonov said Wednesday that two new aircraft would be tested and in the air by 2014 as part of a modernization plan aimed at raising the company's competitiveness.

The company has two major projects under way — the long-awaited cargo prop An-70, expected to complete flight tests by the end of this year, and a cargo jet An-178, currently being designed and expected to be launched in 2014.

The An-178, a cargo version of the An-158, a twin-engined regional passenger jet, will offer a carrying capacity of around 18 tons, the equivalent of 99 soldiers in full gear, said Antonov's chief designer, Dmitry Keeva.

That capacity will be higher than competitors such as the Italian C-27, the American C-130 and even Antonov's own An-74, he said, according to Interfax.

The jet will also be more fuel-efficient than rivals and could be used for transporting shipping

containers, equipment, or injured people, he said.

The An-70, which successfully underwent several flight tests last month, is also a "major breakthrough" in terms of modernization and innovation, he said, adding that its main characteristic is a reduced noise footprint.

The An-70, a medium-range transport plane powered by four propfan engines, has been in development since the 1980s and made its maiden flight in 1994. The project was once a joint venture with Russia, but Russia pulled out in 2006 amid high costs and perpetual delays.

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