

Blimp Race Emerging Between Russia and U.S.

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A prototype of the 122-meter Aeroscraft airship, developed by the founder of Worldwide Aeros, Igor Pasternak.

WASHINGTON — A Soviet-born U.S. entrepreneur has unveiled in California a revolutionary blimp prototype that he says will fly with the precision of a helicopter and that could transform the shipping industry, according to U.S. media reports.

The Aeroscraft airship, brainchild of Worldwide Aeros founder and CEO Igor Pasternak, successfully underwent tethered testing Saturday, according to technology website Gizmag.

Gizmag published photographs showing the 81.07 meter long and 29.56 meter wide craft, under development since 2006, lifting off the ground and remaining under control while attached to a cord.

Pasternak, who was born in the former Soviet republic of Kazakhstan and later moved

to Russia, told the Los Angeles Times that he arrived in the U.S. in 1993 and founded a company similar to one he had in Russia manufacturing blimps, small airships commonly used for advertising.

His efforts in the U.S. resemble those currently also under way in Russia, where a company called Augur RosAeroSystems is pioneering a drive to revive the airships and develop their use in cargo transport.

Indeed Pasternak and the head of the Russian concern, Gennady Verba, were schoolmates in Soviet Ukraine, where they both developed their passion for airships, a mutual friend, Mikhail Talesnikov, vice-president of the Russian company, told RIA Novosti in a recent interview.

In an interview this month with the Los Angeles Times, Pasternak said he dreamed of building airships since childhood. He said he received experimental airworthiness certification from the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration for his prototype a mere two days before the test.

Unlike most blimps, Pasternak's airship uses new concepts and mechanics for compressing and releasing the lighter-than-air, nonflammable helium gas within it similar to the way submarines use ballast and water intake to control precisely their ascent and descent, the reports said.

It also has a rigid frame of the sort seen little since 1940 when the much-traveled airship Graf Zeppelin was retired following the notorious Hindenburg disaster three years earlier.

The final design is expected to be for a zeppelin of more than 122 meters long and capable of transporting a load of 59,874 kilograms. A company spokesman said the first untethered test flight would be "within a few weeks."

Pasternak believes that the Aeroscraft, developed with \$53 million in funding from NASA and the Pentagon, will revolutionize cargo transport because airships can carry heavier loads to more remote locations than can aircraft and land vehicles.

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