

Ukrainian Plane Maker Seeks New Partners to Replace Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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FARNBOROUGH, England — Ukraine's national aircraft manufacturer is looking for new partners in Europe and Asia after ceasing to do business with Russia following months of political tensions.

State-owned Antonov has lost more than \$100 million in business after Russia's annexation of Crimea made cooperation between the two countries impossible, Dmytro Kiva, Antonov's president and general designer, said at the Farnborough International Airshow on Monday.

"We practically don't work with them any more, the Russians. It's very sad, but because of the politics it is simply not possible," he said.

"The current situation in Ukraine has been terrible for our business."

Russia seized control of the Black Sea peninsula from Ukraine in March following

the overthrow of a Moscow-backed president in Kiev. The annexation drew condemnation from Western governments that also accuse Moscow of supporting a separatist revolt in Ukraine's Russian-speaking east.

The conflict has driven relations between Russia and the ex-Soviet republic to an all-time low and sparked the worst crisis in Russia's relations with the West since the Cold War.

Kiva said trade with Russia previously accounted for 10 percent of Antonov's business, which includes design, research and production facilities as well as commercial carrier Antonov Airlines. The company employs 13,500 people and is regarded as a strategic national asset, he said.

"Ten percent, that is not so small," he said. "But we are optimists. We are now looking for further opportunities in Europe and Asia."

Although reluctant to say with whom, Kiva said talks were ongoing with a number of large Western companies.

The challenges faced by Antonov, which produced and now operates the world's largest plane, the An-225, are not the only display of tensions over the Ukraine crisis at Farnborough.

The British Foreign Office delivered a diplomatic snub to Russia last week by pointedly not inviting any government officials and airshow organizers said that more than 100 Russian delegates had been unable to attend after failing to receive British visas.

Russian visitors to the show have called for business interests to stay out of the world of international politics and say Russian companies unable to attend the airshow could lose out on lucrative foreign sales and contracts.

But Kiva, who joined Antonov 50 years ago this September, said political wrangling in the aerospace and defense industry was unavoidable.

"Big business means big money so it is inevitable that politics will be involved," he said, proudly displaying his Ukrainian passport, complete with British visa.

"But I am an optimist," he added. "I know that in the end everything will be OK. We have clever, talented young people, a new generation of engineers, academics and pilots."

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