The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Canada Moves to Give Ukraine Stranded Russian Cargo Plane

May 05, 2025



The Antonov An-124.

Canada is moving forward with a legal bid to gain full possession of a Russian Antonov An-124 cargo plane and potentially hand it over to Ukraine, the country's foreign ministry has said.

The Antonov An-124 — the world's largest mass-produced cargo aircraft — has been stranded at Toronto Pearson International Airport for over three years due to airspace restrictions that Canada imposed due to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

"The Attorney General of Canada commenced forfeiture proceedings by seeking the issuance of a Notice of Application by the Superior Court of Ontario on March 18, 2025," a spokesperson for Global Affairs Canada told the Ontario-based news outlet Insauga.

The Antonov An-124 is one of 26 aircraft of its type in the world. Roughly the height of a seven-story building and nearly the length of a football field, it is owned by Volga-Dnepr Airlines, a private Russian cargo carrier, and is valued at approximately $300 million.

Related article: Lithuania to Spend $1.2Bln on Border Defenses With Russia and Belarus

The plane had been transporting a shipment of Covid-19 test kits from China to Canada when Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine on Feb. 24, 2022. Ottawa closed its airspace to Russian airlines three days later, while the plane was still unloading its cargo in Toronto.

Canadian authorities formally seized the aircraft in June 2023. At the time, then-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that the aircraft would soon be delivered to Kyiv so it could never be used by Russia again.

Ownership of the plane has since been tied up in an ongoing legal battle, with Volga-Dnepr filing lawsuits in Canada in a bid to stop the confiscation.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has called the seizure of the plane "cynical and shameless theft."

Volga-Dnepr founder Alexei Isaikin, a former military economist, built the company into a global leader in oversized cargo transport using the Antonov An-124 in the 1990s. He was sanctioned by the U.S., Canada and the U.K. following the invasion of Ukraine.

Ownership of the airline has since passed to senior executives Igor Aksenov, Valery Gabriel, Sergei Dyachkov and Vildan Zinnurov.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2025/05/05/canada-moves-to-give-ukraine-stranded-russian-cargo-plane-a88977