

Airbus leads commercial aircraft business for 5th consecutive year

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Dhaka: While American planemaker Boeing struggled to contain its latest crisis—the in-flight door plug blowout on an Alaska Airlines 737 MAX 9—Airbus enjoyed a successful year in 2023, dominating the commercial aircraft business. As per the data on 2023's jet orders and deliveries released by both manufacturers, Airbus was the world's top planemaker for the 5th **consecutive year**.

Airbus delivered 735 commercial jets in 2023, compared to Boeing's 528. Airbus won almost 2,100 net orders, a new record, versus slightly over 1,300 for Boeing. About 1,700 of those Airbus orders were for its successful A320neo and A321neo family. That is nearly twice the orders Boeing won for its competing 737 MAX aircraft.

That data combined with the new sense of crisis at Boeing has produced a bleak outlook among industry insiders, as per reports.

With air travel now fully recovered after the Covid-19 downturn, demand for aircraft is at record levels while supply from the world's two major manufacturers is still well below pre-pandemic levels.

However, Airbus is gearing up. From delivering in 2023 an average of about 48 A320neo family aircraft per month, Airbus projects reaching 75 per month in 2026. Between Hamburg in Germany, Toulouse in France, Tianjin in China and Mobile, Ala, Airbus currently runs eight final assembly lines for those narrowbody airplanes. By 2026, it will add two more lines, one in Tianjin and another in Mobile.

For the widebody A350 jets, which averaged just over five deliveries per month in 2023, the 2026 target is 10 aircraft per month, added reports. The small narrowbody A220 aircraft, against which Boeing has no competing airplane, averaged nearly six deliveries per month in 2023, the 2026 target is 14 per month. In the narrowbody jet market, the Airbus lead looks unassailable, further mentioned industry insiders, as per reports.

In the second quarter of 2024, Airbus expects to deliver the first of a new extra-long-range model, the A321XLR. It is already taken orders for 550 of those, which airlines will use on international routes instead of more expensive widebody aircraft. Boeing has nothing to compete with the A321neo, never mind the XLR version.

Reports estimate the dollar value of the 2023 commercial jet orders at USD 153 billion for Airbus and USD 115 billion for Boeing. The aircraft deliveries from Airbus are estimated to be worth about USD 48 billion compared to about USD 39 billion for Boeing.

One spark of hope for Boeing in the data is that the US plane manufacturer managed to hold onto its historical lead in the larger widebody market. Boeing delivered 132 widebody aircraft to 96 for Airbus and sold 431 widebody jets to 278 for Airbus. This was mainly due to the success of the 787 in both new orders and deliveries.

However, the Airbus widebody A350 is gaining momentum and achieved a huge win in January 2024 when Delta ordered 20 A350-1000s—the biggest model.

On the other hand, certification of Boeing's forthcoming giant jet, 777X (passenger version), is long delayed, and the jet is not expected to enter

service until late 2025. In addition, Airbus previously did not compete in the widebody freighter market. Two years ago, it launched the A350F freighter, which now has 50 orders.

A new global aviation carbon emissions standard threatens to force the shuttering of Boeing's current 767F and 777F widebody freighter programmes four years from now. Neither of those jets won any new orders in 2023.

Meaning, in the immediate future, widebody cargo jet sales campaigns may have more even battles than in the past, with the freighter version of Boeing's 777X competing against Airbus' A350F. However, the 777X cargo version is not due to enter service until 2027, two years after the A350F. The 777X has to have a successful debut if Boeing is to stem the A350's momentum.

After the MAX production setbacks in 2023, Boeing had hoped for a fresh start in 2024. Things looked to be headed up toward the end of 2023, with big sales wins in November at the Dubai Air Show and 67 jet deliveries in December, the highest monthly total for the year. However, the hope for a turnaround has now been set way back.

The Alaska in-flight incident has grounded MAX 9s, will inevitably slow future production because of the need for extra inspections, and could cause the FAA to delay certifying the final two MAX models, the MAX 7 and MAX 10, added reports.

Boeing's customers, the airlines, are hurting from the grounded airplanes. The trust of both the regulators and the traveling public is broken, reports also said citing industry insiders.

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