

Boeing's own jet emerges as surprise rival to its brand-new freighter

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Dhaka: A converted passenger jet is shaping up as an unexpected competitor to Boeing's next-generation cargo aircraft, the 777-8F, and it is built from Boeing's own airframes.

Leasing giant AerCap and Israel Aerospace Industries are converting retired Boeing 777-300ER jets into large freighters dubbed the "Big Twin," offering cargo operators a cost-effective alternative to the upcoming Boeing 777-8F.

The converted aircraft can carry 33 main-deck pallets and roughly 819 cubic meters of cargo volume, slightly exceeding the 777-8F's capacity, and is optimized for bulky, lighter shipments such as e-commerce packages, where volume often matters more than payload weight.

Cost presents a compelling case. A Big Twin conversion is estimated at

USD 60-80 million, compared to the 777-8F's list price exceeding USD 400 million.

Timing adds further appeal. Big Twin conversions are already entering service, while the 777-8F is not expected until later this decade.

Multiple air freight carriers, including the American Kalitta Air and Hong Kong-based Fly Meta, have taken deliveries of the 777-300ERSF "Big Twin" jets already and introduced the type on schedule.

For cargo airlines retiring aging Boeing 747-400F fleets, the combination of lower cost, high volume, and immediate availability of the 777-300ERSF could make Boeing's own next-generation freighter a difficult sell.

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