



BOEING DESIGNED A STRANGE PLANE THAT WOULD SUCK UP SHIPPING CONTAINERS

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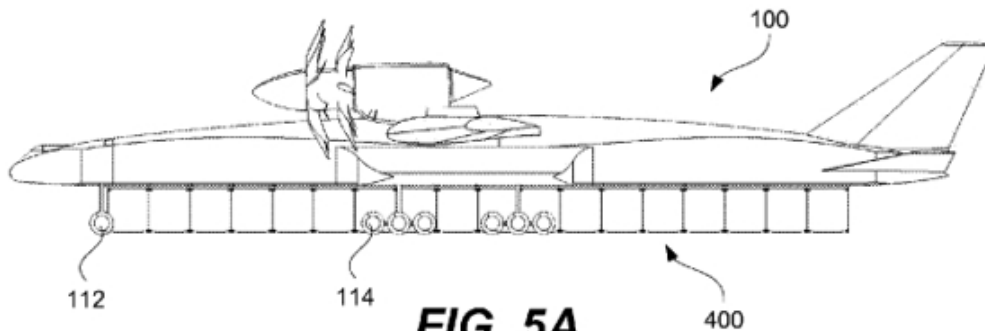


FIG. 5A

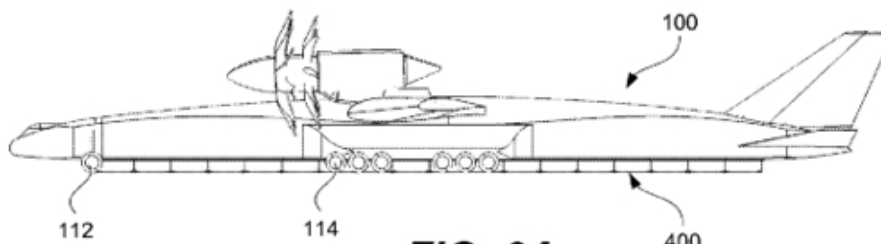


FIG. 6A

Boeing received a patent last month for a unique airplane design that would lower onto shipping containers and then lock them into place. The strange-looking design has landing gear that is wider than the shipping containers and a large fuselage that opens underneath the plane for the containers to slot into.

Existing cargo planes don't use the standardized intermodal shipping containers that you see on cargo ships and trains. Instead, air freight is transported using the unit load device (ULD) system, which packs cargo into smaller containers and onto pallets for transport on both cargo planes and standard passenger aircraft. Boeing's design would not only allow a plane to carry more cargo, but would also transport air freight in the standardized containers to streamline the shipping process.

The intermodal containers may be loaded through an opening in the bottom of the fuselage. Specifically, intermodal containers may be arranged into a row. The aircraft may be then rolled over this row of the containers and lowered onto the containers followed by engaging container corners.

Patent Yogi has a great—if a little peculiar—animated video of what Boeing's plane might look like in action, if it ever existed:

As with many ambitious patents, it is likely that Boeing is simply securing priority of an idea just in case they ever decide to act on it. A plane that can lower its entire body and lift more than a dozen

shipping containers would require a lot of testing and design work to actually accomplish. Still, it's a cool idea, and maybe the aerospace giant can pull it off.

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