WITH PUTIN'S BLESSING, BOEING BOOSTS RUSSIAN PARTNERSHIP

News / Manufacturer

Russian President Vladimir Putin used his visit to this week's MAKS airshow in Moscow to urge Western aerospace firms to expand their partnerships with Russian companies despite continuing economic sanctions against Russia imposed by the European Union, the U.S. and Canada. Commenting after an event on August 25 when Boeing appointed Russian titanium supplier VSMPO-Avisma as a strategic partner for the 777X program, the Russian leader said that he hopes "mutually beneficial international programs with Russian aerospace industry's participation do not get affected by politics."

Under the terms of the latest agreement between Boeing and VSMPO-Avisma, the Russian company will supply various titanium components for the new 777X's largely composite wing. First deliveries of the new twinjet are due to be made in 2020, with production starting in 2017.

VSMPO-Avisma CEO Mikhail Voevodin told reporters that the company's partnership with Boeing is now in its third decade. Last year, the U.S. airframer extended its framework agreement to take Russian titanium through 2022.

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Speaking at the MAKS event, Sergei Kravchenko, Boeing's president for Russia and the CIS, commented: "I do not have doubts that our joint venture [with VSMPO-Avisma] will be expanding, regardless of the complicated political situation." The Ural Boeing Manufacturing (UBM) joint venture was established in 2009 and is a 50-50 partnership between Boeing and Russia's Rostec conglomerate and its subsidiary VSMPO-Avisma. The company already supplies highly machined titanium parts for the 787-8/9 widebody, using U.S.-supplied machinery. Titanium accounts for approximately 20 percent of the 787's airframe weight and UBM supplies about half of this total. Boeing plans to increase 787 production rates from 10 per month this year to 12 per month next year.

Boeing and Russian partners, including the Krunichev Space Center, also announced the extension of their cooperation on the International Space Station program through 2020. President Putin spoke with senior Boeing officials for a prolonged period during the MAKS show.

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