

Reports: Russia's Superjet to be certified in July

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(AP) -- Russia's much-anticipated regional passenger aircraft, the Sukhoi Superjet, should be given flight certification by the summer, officials reportedly said Wednesday.

The Superjet, produced by Russian airline maker Sukhoi in association with Italy's Alenia Aeronautica, has been widely seen as Russia's chance to gain a competitive foothold in the international passenger airline market.

The jet, which seats 75 to 95 people, has a range of about 4,000 kilometers (2,500 miles) and is priced at \$29 million a piece.

Superjet is designed compete against other regional craft such as the Embraer E-Jets and the Bombardier CRJ program. Locally, it will replace Russia's aging fleet of Soviet-designed Tu-134s and Yak-42s in moving people across Russia's vast spaces.

Sukhoi has orders for 122 [aircraft](#) from airlines across Europe and at home, where Russia's biggest carrier Aeroflot - which has ordered 30 Superjets - recently withdrew its creaking, Soviet-era Tu-154 fleet from service.

But persistent delays over the Superjet engines have set back delivery dates, making Wednesday's announcement by Industry Minister Viktor Khristenko a welcome development.

Khristenko told the parliament the Superjet 100 had gone through the final certification tests last year and is likely to receive a so-called type certificate in July, RIA Novosti and ITAR-Tass reported.

"The granting of the type certificate is scheduled for July 2010," he was quoted as saying.

A type certificate is awarded to a manufacturer to certify that a plane's design fulfills current requirements for aircraft safety standards. The certificate, which clears the way for Superjet to be delivered and used by Russian airlines, is awarded by Russia's Aviation Register of the Interstate Aviation Committee. The company is also applying for an EU certificate.

Russian carriers account for more than half of the Superjet order portfolio to date, and companies in Italy, Switzerland, Hungary, Spain, Poland and Armenia make up the rest.

Sukhoi officials recently announced they expect the first deliveries in mid-2010.

The new jet arrives at a time when Russian airlines are facing rising fuel costs, with kerosene costing more than twice what it did a year ago. Analysts say the new jet will.

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