

Boeing eyes more 737 Max sales after post-crash drought

June 20 2019, by Angela Charlton And Catherine Gaschka



In this May 8, 2019, file photo, a Boeing 737 MAX 8 jetliner being built for Turkish Airlines takes off on a test flight in Renton, Wash. Boeing announced its first order for 737 Max jets this week since two deadly crashes of the jet, and says it is in discussions with several other customers around the world interested in the plane despite concerns about software implicated in the accidents. (AP Photo/Ted S. Warren, File)

Boeing's post-crash business slump may be coming to an end.

The plane maker said Thursday that it's in negotiations with several customers interested in buying the 737 Max jet, as it tries to rebuild trust in the plane and its own reputation after two Max crashes that killed 346 people.

But rival Airbus is keeping up the pressure, seeking to win over the one and only Max customer Boeing has landed so far since the accidents.

While the Max remains grounded pending regulatory approval of a software fix, Boeing Senior Vice President Ihssane Mounir said that several companies around the world are considering new 737 Max orders because "it's a long-term game, and people would like to get ahead of their plans."

At the Paris Air Show this week, Boeing won its first endorsement of the 737 since an Ethiopian Airlines crash in March and a Lion Air crash in October in Indonesia. IAG, owner of British Airways and several other carriers, signed a letter of intent for a mammoth purchase: 200 Max aircraft worth \$24 billion at list prices.

While the deal is subject to final agreement, it was a vote of confidence in Boeing as it struggles to win back trust from airlines, pilots, regulators and the traveling public.



Sara Nelson with the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, right, speaks with Captain Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger left, before a House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure hearing on the status of the Boeing 737 MAX on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, June 19, 2019. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)

"We were very glad and very humbled and deeply honored" by the deal, Mounir told reporters, saying the air show came at a particularly "difficult time" for Boeing.

Airbus seemed caught off guard by the order—and CEO Guillaume Faury stressed that it's only a preliminary offer. He said Thursday that the European plane maker "will be very happy to compete" with Boeing to persuade IAG to buy Airbus planes instead.

Despite the prospective pickup in business, Boeing is still far from being in the clear over the crash. The findings of investigations into the crashes are still pending, and the company gave no clear sign this week of when regulators could allow the Max to fly again.

Both companies had less business than usual at the air show, amid a slowing world economy and trade tensions hurting manufacturers with factories and clients in multiple countries.



Deveney Williams, right, wipes a tear from her eye as she and Diana Sotomayor, left, and Hayley Freedman, center, all friends of Samya Rose Stumo, hold up a sign depicting those lost in Ethiopian Airlines Flight 302 during a House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure hearing on the status of the Boeing 737 MAX on Capitol Hill in Washington, Wednesday, June 19, 2019. Stumo was killed in the plane crash. (AP Photo/Andrew Harnik)



An Airbus A330 performs a demonstration flight at Paris Air Show, in Le Bourget, north east of Paris, France, Tuesday, June 18, 2019. The world's aviation elite are gathering at the Paris Air Show with safety concerns on many minds after two crashes of the popular Boeing 737 Max. (AP Photo/ Francois Mori)

Overall, Airbus secured more firm orders or promises from customers than Boeing, notably of the newly launched A321XLR single-aisle, long-range plane.

Mounir said Boeing isn't yet ready to launch a similar new [plane](#) they called the New Midsized Aircraft, or NMA, insisting his company is

focusing "on the safe and reliable return to service (of the 737 Max). We're working with our customers. We're working with the regulators and that's our first priority."

Airline union leaders and famed former pilot Chesley "Sully" Sullenberger told a U.S. congressional hearing Wednesday that Boeing made mistakes while developing the 737 Max—notably by not telling anybody about new flight-control software so pilots could train for it.

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