

Long-haul carrier Emirates announces \$52 billion aircraft buy from Boeing as Dubai Air Show opens

November 13 2023, by Jon Gambrell



From left, Boeing Co. Vice President Stan Deal, Emirates CEO and Chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum and General Electric Co. CEO Lawrence Culp Jr. sign a \$52 billion deal by Emirates to purchase Boeing aircraft with GE engines, at the Dubai Air Show, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Dubai Crown Prince Sheikh Hamdan bin Mohammed Al Maktoum watches from behind them. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air

Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Lujain Jo

Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show on Monday with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security.

Its low-cost sister airline, FlyDubai, followed up with an \$11 billion order of 30 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners, the first wide-body aircraft in its fleet. Together, the sales marked a significant win for Virginia-based Boeing Co. on the first day of the air show, as airlines appear poised for even more billion-dollar deals this year.

Emirates made the announcement witnessed by the crown prince of Dubai, Sheikh Hamad bin Mohammed Al Maktoum, at an afternoon news conference. Emirates CEO and Chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum said the deal would see the carrier purchase 90 Boeing 777 aircraft, 55 of them 777-9 variants and 35 of them 777-8s.

Emirates will also add an additional five 787 Dreamliners to its previous order of 30 aircraft, Sheikh Saeed said.

"This is a long-term commitment that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs, not only at Boeing but also throughout the global aviation supply chain," he said. "The 777 is at the center of Emirates' strategy to connect cities on all continents nonstop to Dubai."



Boeing Co. Vice President Stan Deal, left, and Emirates CEO and Chairman Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, sign a deal for 30 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliners for low-cost carrier FlyDubai at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Lujain Jo

Stan Deal, an executive vice president at Boeing, praised the deal.

"All these products point to the future of Emirates," Deal said.

With Monday's order, that put the total number of outstanding Boeing

777 orders for Emirates to 205 aircraft.

Emirates officials stressed that FlyDubai's order was separate from the long-haul carrier, though the two airlines are both owned by a sovereign wealth fund called the Investment Corporation of Dubai. The purchase represents a major change for FlyDubai, which to this point has only flown Boeing 737 single-aisle aircraft on shorter distances.

Both Deal and Sheikh Saeed left the news conference without taking questions, which was a departure from previous sales announcements.

The air show this year comes amid the Israel-Hamas war, as well as Russia's war on Ukraine, which will likely influence the five-day show at Al Maktoum Airport at Dubai World Central. It is the city-state's second airfield after Dubai International Airport, which is the world's busiest for international travel and the home base for Emirates.



An Emirati reaches out to explore an Emirates Airbus A380 at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

During a flying display at the show, the U.S. Air Force conducted an overflight with a supersonic B-1 bomber, the same type of nuclear-capable aircraft it has flown over the Mideast amid the recent tensions over the war and with Iran. Also on display were an A-10 Thunderbolt II and an F-35 fighter jet, types of planes that also were brought into the region as a deterrent.

While commercial aviation takes much of the attention, arms manufacturers also have exhibitions at the show. Two major Israeli firms—Rafael Advanced Defense Systems Ltd. and Israel Aerospace Industries—had been slated to participate.

But the IAI stand, bearing the slogan "Where Courage Meets Technology," was roped off and empty Monday morning as people poured into the show. A stand for Rafael handed out coffee, though there were no salespeople there. A request for comment left with an attendant there was not immediately returned.

Rafael also sponsored a meeting of air force commanders Sunday at a luxury Dubai hotel, highlighting the balancing act being struck by the UAE amid anger in the Arab world over the Israel-Hamas war.



A visitor reaches out to touch the Gatling-style autocannon on an U.S. A-10 Thunderbolt II on display at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

The UAE, a federation of seven sheikhdoms, established diplomatic relations with Israel in 2020.

The firm Russian Helicopters had listed their staff would be on hand for the air show after appearing at the Abu Dhabi arms fair earlier this year despite being sanctioned by the U.S. and others over Moscow's war on Ukraine. Roscosmos, the Russian state space company, is also at the show, as were the Russian Knights, the precision flying team of the Russian air force.

An Associated Press journalist at the show also saw Gen. Khalifa Hifter, who leads the self-styled Libyan National Army and controls the North African nation's east and south. Another AP team saw Afghan Taliban Envoy to the United Arab Emirates Badruddin Haqqani walk through the business class of an Emirates A380 on display.

Global aviation is booming after the coronavirus pandemic saw worldwide lockdowns and aircraft grounded—particularly at Al Maktoum Airport, which served for months as a parking lot for Emirates double-decker Airbus 380s.



Visitors take photos at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

Air traffic is now at 97% of pre-COVID levels, according to the International Air Transport Association. Middle Eastern airlines, which supply key East-West routes for global travel, saw a 26.6% increase in September traffic compared to a year earlier, IATA says.

Emirates, a main economic engine for Dubai amid its booming real estate market, announced record half-year profits of \$2.7 billion Thursday. That is up from \$1.2 billion for the same period last year,

potentially putting the airline on track for another record-breaking year. The airline says it has repaid some \$2.5 billion of the loans it received during the height of the pandemic to stay afloat.

Also in the market for aircraft is Riyadh Air, a new Saudi carrier being created as part of trillions of dollars worth of spending planned in the kingdom. In March, the airline announced an order of up to 72 Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner jetliners and has further plans to expand.

Turkish Airlines may also make a record-shattering purchase of 355 aircraft from Airbus, including 250 A321neo aircraft, according to the state-run Anadolu news agency. Indian airlines have been on a buying spree as well.



An visitor pauses to take a photo at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Gambrell



An Emirates cargo flight takes off over an Emirates Airbus A380 on display at the Dubai Air Show in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Monday, Nov. 13, 2023. Long-haul carrier Emirates opened the Dubai Air Show with a \$52 billion purchase of Boeing Co. aircraft, showing how aviation has bounced back after the groundings of the coronavirus pandemic, even as Israel's war with Hamas clouds regional security. Credit: AP Photo/Jon Gambrell

By Monday afternoon, Boeing Co. announced that SunExpress, an airline jointly owned by Turkish Airlines and Lufthansa, made a commitment to purchase up to 90 single-aisle Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. The deal includes 28 Boeing 737-8s and 17 Boeing 737-10s models, as well as the opportunity for another 45 Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. The companies did not offer a dollar figure for the deal.

Rounding out Monday's sales, Airbus said airBaltic of Latvia ordered another 30 single-aisle A220-300s, but the France-based manufacturer did not reveal the sales price. Boeing said Royal Jordanian ordered four 787-9 Dreamliners, while Royal Air Maroc ordered two 787-9s.

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