

Aerospace Industry Soars as Passenger Planes are Converted to Cargo Freighters

Posted on June 8, 2023 by Business Editor



The aerospace industry has experienced significant growth in a niche sector driven by surging air cargo demand. The price of shipping goods by air reached record levels in late 2021 due to robust e-commerce demand, port congestion, and limited airline capacity resulting from pandemic-related disruptions.

To meet the heightened demand for air freight, a remarkable transformation has taken place in the aerospace industry: passenger planes are being converted into cargo freighters. In 2021, a record-breaking 164 planes underwent this conversion process, as reported by aviation data firm Cirium.

Although air cargo rates have since declined due to increased passenger airline capacity, companies like Boeing continue to expand their conversion operations to meet ongoing orders.

Conversion facilities worldwide, from Texas to Singapore, have become hubs for this intricate process. Technicians meticulously strip out passenger seats, galleys, lavatories, and other interior components. Afterward, the aircraft's floor is reinforced to support heavy cargo loads, and specialized cargo doors are installed for loading and unloading.

Mammoth Freighters in Fort Worth, Texas, are converting Boeing 777 wide-body aircraft into colossal cargo haulers. This transformation process can span several months and cost millions of dollars, with some conversions exceeding \$30 million per plane, including maintenance expenses. Remarkably, companies specializing in aircraft conversions report a steady influx of orders despite the dip in shipping rates.

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