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# European deal worth close to \$5bn means C Series could finally soar above the clouds



A C Series jet

By Margaret Canning

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Bombardier's C Series narrow-bodied jet programme may finally soar over former obstacles in its way after winning a \$4.8bn deal from a new European customer, an analyst has claimed.

The Canadian aerospace giant, which employs around 4,000 people here, has announced a deal potentially worth close to \$5bn for up to 61 of its C Series planes, the wings of which are made in Belfast.

It's been interpreted as a vindication of a new arrangement with arch-rival Airbus announced last month for co-operation in C Series production.

President and chief executive Alain Bellemare said: "This significant new order confirms the increasing confidence customers have in the C Series.

"Looking forward, as Airbus joins the programme and with C Series continuing to prove itself in service, we expect sales momentum to accelerate quickly."

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The jet was launched two years ago, after going around \$2bn over budget and suffering a two-year delay.

Since then it's faced the further setback of a US action by rival Boeing, resulting in tariffs of 300% on its imports into the US.

Yesterday, Bombardier refused to give any further details of the new deal, and whether it would mean a recruitment drive for more workers in its wing-building programme.

And it's not expected to change the course of 280 job losses in its support functions in Northern Ireland, which were announced last week. Around 1,000 people are currently employed in the making of the wings, which are made from sophisticated composite materials.

Yesterday, Bombardier's third quarter results revealed that a European customer had signed a letter of intent for up to 61 C Series including 31 firm aircraft and options for an additional 30 aircraft.

The firm order is worth \$2.4bn or \$4.8bn if all options are exercised.

Martin Craigs, a former Bombardier worker and ex-chief executive of Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), said the deal was "terrific news" for Belfast.

"It shows the power of Airbus marketing. To be announcing this within two weeks of the deal is astonishing. It speaks to the power and influence of Airbus marketing and the confidence which customers are now having in the programme as a result," he said.

Last week Bombardier announced that complications with United Technologies, which produces its Pratt and Whitney jet engines, meant it was having to review its delivery plans.


Addison Schonland, an analyst at [airinsight.com](http://airinsight.com), said the order - along with its tie-up with Airbus and its performance with existing customers - had transformed the C Series' prospects.

"Airlines and lessors can review and consider the C Series without anywhere near the risk and concern they had even three months ago," he said. "In conclusion, the C Series programme may, at last, be breaking through the numerous barriers that have been thrown in its path."

The firm yesterday revealed full-year earnings would be around \$630m in its third-quarter results. Mr Bellemare said the results highlighted "continued progress transforming the company".

Belfast Telegraph

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