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Arrest in Italy Shines Light on Russian-Made Passenger Plane

By Abigail Buhrman

The MS-21 passenger jet was publicly unveiled for the first time on Aug. 27 at the international MAKS-2019 air show in Zhukovskiy, Russia.

Three days later, an executive of the Russian state-owned company overseeing the development of the aircraft's engines was detained in Naples, Italy, on U.S. charges of conspiring to steal trade secrets used in engine designs from a subsidiary of General Electric Co.

The complaint against Alexander Korshunov, director of business development at **United Engine Corporation**, unsealed Sept. 5 in Ohio federal court alleges that he worked with Maurizio Bianchi, an Italian man also charged in the case, to hire employees of a GE subsidiary to do consulting work. Those employees revealed GE trade secrets during the course of their work and produced documents that claimed the patents obtained as a result of the work were held by **United Engine Corporation** and a Russian ministry, according to the complaint.

The PD-14 engine, which will power the MS-21 jet once it hits the market, is one of the designs mentioned in the complaint filed against Korshunov and Bianchi.

Russian President Vladimir Putin addressed the arrest while at the Vladivostok Eastern Economic Forum, [Bloomberg](#) reported. "This is very bad practice that strains our state relations," he was quoted as saying, adding that he believes that the incident is "connected to competition."

The MS-21, lauded as "the passenger plane of the 21st century," by Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, is the country's first mainline commercial aircraft in the post-Soviet era, and an aspiring competitor to aircraft produced by international giants Boeing Co. and Airbus SE. Russia's only other passenger aircraft in operation, the Sukhoi Superjet 100, has a history of technical faults and two major crashes since it began flights in 2011.

