'IMPOSSIBLE' TO REPLACE WESTERN SUPERJET SUPPLIERS: SJI CHIEF

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It would not be feasible to **replace** North American and European suppliers with Russian ones on the Sukhoi Superjet programme, in the view of the executive charged with leading Western sales campaigns for the regional airliner.

Citing recertification costs and the risk of damage to the brand, SuperJet International **(SJI**) chief executive Nazario Cauceglia concludes: "This possibility is **impossible**."

In August, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft (SCAC) disclosed a plan to reduce the cost of producing the 100-seater by $2.6 million per aircraft by introducing Russian suppliers which would be paid in roubles.

"The Russians know what it would mean in terms of investment," Cauceglia told Flightglobal on 29 September. "But I think it is nearly impossible given that we say the Superjet is an international product. I don't think it is a problem we will have."

Alenia Aermacchi and Sukhoi have had a fractious relationship since partnering to set up SCAC and the sales and support venture SJI, with Russia's plunging currency and political crises over Moscow's foreign policy compounding tensions.

However, Cauceglia says Sukhoi and SJl intend to work closer by merging their separate sales operations. Until now, the two organisations have maintained a strict divide of sales territories,

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although the Italian unit is responsible for global training and support.

"The shareholders have decided to review the partnership model, and the aim is to become more integrated and not to show ourselves as two companies any more," he says. "It will no longer be important if a sales contract is signed by SuperJet International or SCAC."

SJI has secured just one firm Western customer, Mexico's Interjet. All 30 Superjets ordered by Interjet will be delivered by the end of next year, although Cauceglia says he is "confident" of securing further commitments before then.

In total, 75 Superjets have been delivered, the majority to airlines in Russia and the CIS.

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