



## Shattered Dream

### Russia Destroys the An-225

It is, or rather was, the world’s largest airplane. The Ukrainians nicknamed her *Mriya*, meaning “dream” or “inspiration.” *Mriya* can now be added to the list of victims in the brutal invasion of Ukraine, begun weeks ago on the orders

of Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The An-225 was severely battered during the February battles around “Antonov Airport” (Hostomel, GML) but the damage could not be fully assessed until Russian forces withdrew from the area in early April.

It appears that the aircraft, last registered UR-82060, took a rocket or artillery round in the upper fuselage just forward of the wings. Most of the remainder of the aircraft was peppered with shrapnel.

Designed to tote the Soviet “Buran” knockoff of the U.S. Space Shuttle, the An-225 was built by the Antonov Bureau in Kiev (Kyiv).

Antonov was no stranger to large aircraft—the resemblance of the An-225 to the four-engine An-124 (NATO reporting name “Condor”) is obvious. The still larger An-225 made its inaugural flight in in December 1988.

The next year, the An-225/Buran combo made quite a splash at the Paris airshow. A solo appearance at the 1990

Farnborough show completed a widely hyped introduction to the West.

The An-225 was in fact an impressive machine. Inevitably, comparisons were made with the nearest U.S. equivalent, the Lockheed C-5 Galaxy. With a wingspan some 27% wider than the Galaxy and boasting more than 50% higher maximum takeoff weight, the Antonov could justifiably claim “the world’s largest” title.

After the collapse of the USSR and cancellation of the Buran program, the aircraft was mothballed for nearly eight years. Brought out of storage in 2001, a U.S. \$20 million refurbishment, including installation of quieter turbofans and up-to-date avionics, brought the big bird up to international certification standards.

The An-225 solidified its place in aviation history by hauling record amounts of cargo all over the world. *Mriya* appeared in American skies on several occasions, its many missions

This article shows that Ukraine created the world’s largest cargo jet ever built. It is a remarkable story.

Enjoy!

John Haas  
Idling my time away in  
beautiful New Hampshire



(2-page article.)

including airlifting oil refinery components from Milan, Italy, to Wichita, Kan., (via Bangor, Maine) and airlifting a 120-ton power generator from Raleigh-Durham (RDU), N.C., to Tanzania.

But the U.S. and NATO never lost sight of the An-225's military potential, assigning it the reporting name "Cossack."

Ironically, the An-225's last cargo run was a humanitarian mission, hauling 90 tons of Covid testing kits and PPE from Tianjin, China (TSN) to Billund, Denmark (BLL.) UR-82060 returned to Hostomel on February 5 where, deliberately or otherwise, it was destroyed in the battle that followed. ➔

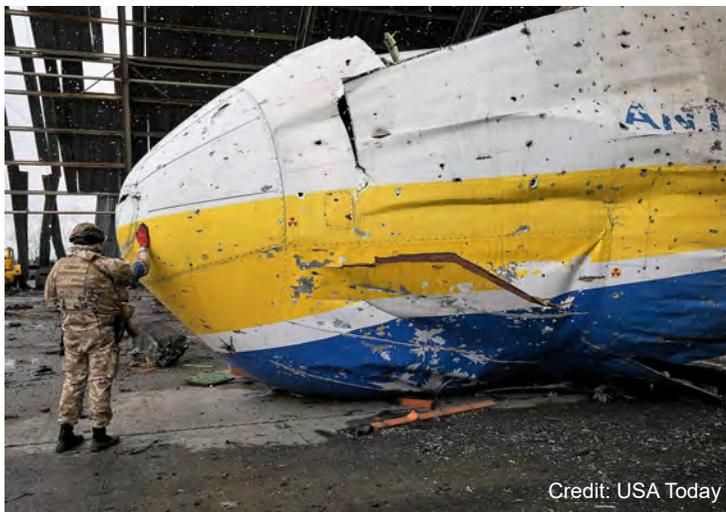
Article by Joe Martin



*The lone An-225, carrying the Buran orbiter, as it appeared at the Paris Air Show, 1989. The orbiter, clearly a copy of the U.S. Space Shuttle, made its one and only orbital flight, a 3-hour unmanned, auto-piloted mission, on November 15, 1988.*

*When the Buran program was canceled in the early 1990s, the An-225 was put in mothballs. Resurrected years later, it went on to a successful heavy lift career before being destroyed in its hanger during the Russian invasion of Ukraine.*

Credit: Ralf Manteufel via <http://www.airliners.net>



Credit: USA Today



Credit: USA Today

*(Above left) A Ukrainian soldier pats the broken nose of the "Dream." The damage is far too severe to be economically repaired.*

*(Above right) Even the less damaged portions of the aircraft are pocked with shrapnel holes.*

*(Right) The partially finished hull of the second An-225. Construction was halted years ago. Its current status is unclear, but Mriya is something of a national symbol. Some Ukrainian authorities believe the second ship could be completed. But replacing 1980s components would be a tough job, if it can be done at all.*



Credit: Getty Images