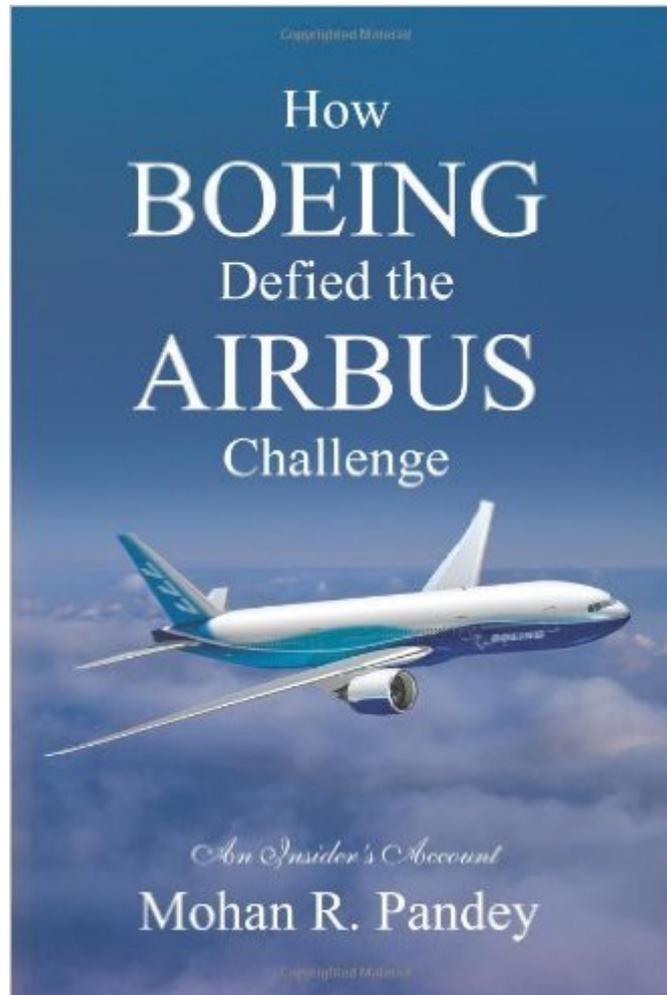


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How Boeing Defied The Airbus Challenge: An Insider's Account



Synopsis

For the first time since WWII, a European airplane manufacturer, Airbus, not only succeeded in challenging Boeing, the storied American aviation titan, but also nearly crippled the giant—a fate fully realized by McDonnell Douglas, a previous American icon. This book chronicles an insider's account of more than two decades of how Boeing fought back in the extremely fierce, high-stakes, and highly political quest for global aviation supremacy. The book also shows how the industry shapes the regulations and, working with the regulators, how it has changed the direction of aviation.

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Customer Reviews

I love aviation in general and jetliners in particular, so I was pleased (disclosure) when my longtime friend Mohan Pandey wrote this book. While it covers familiar Boeing and Airbus products and history, it does so in a new way in the context of "ETOPS." If you haven't heard of ETOPS ("extended operations"), it's the global regulatory framework that makes air travel safer on long overwater routes that take jetliners far from alternate airports. The heart of this book is a huge, no-hold-barred battle fought under the radar by Airbus and Boeing. Waged in the ETOPS arena, this all-out warfare pitted the four-engine Airbus A340 against the twin-engine Boeing 777 and also involved the Airbus A380 super jumbo. For both companies, the stakes were staggeringly huge and the consequences of failure too dire to contemplate. Amazingly, the world scarcely knew this clash of titans was even taking place and remains largely oblivious of its outcome. The dramatic results --

and I'm dodging a spoiler here -- will continue to shape the destinies of both companies well into the future. The author had a front-row seat as Boeing's chosen representative at ETOPS deliberations around the world. The forums Pandey participated in or led (working side by side with Airbus experts and other parties) collectively shaped this evolving regulatory framework over a quarter century. A retired Boeing aeronautical engineer, Pandey uses his insider's perspective to explain Airbus' great gamble: a carefully crafted "pincer strategy" whose intent was to trump the U.S. company and end its traditional dominance. Then things went wrong and ETOPS suddenly took on new meaning and urgency for Airbus.... The subject is contentious enough that this book may elicit charges of bias.

After reading this book, I have a very hard time trying to decide what to write about it. Basically I would say that reading this book was very interesting, the author being quite knowledgeable... however I was often frustrated by statements that were either inexact or biased. I'm not sure whether the author is just communicating Boeing official statements or if his own opinion is the one stated in the book. To explain what I mean, here are some examples:- the author claims that since the 80s Boeing has stopped using corruption to sell planes (while Airbus could till 2000), the US Air Force Tanker proved the contrary and the recent releases by Wikileaks proved the opposite. There were also some unproven statements about some other sales like the Thai Airways sale... "Officially" Boeing was not able to use corruption, but it requires being very naive to imagine Boeing could sell planes without it in many countries.- he also explains that Airbus got a lot of political backup for selling planes... while Boeing didn't. Again this is very inexact as the Turkish Airline sale proved: in exchange for the purchase of Boeing planes instead of Airbus, they got a slot on the next NASA launch... That was official, like several others. But wikileaks showed even more interesting things- the most surprising for me was the discussion about ETOPS. From a technical point of view, I agree with what was said... but from a practical point of view, explaining that ETOPS increases the risk for the cruise part (even slightly), would not have been accepted by the FAA. FAA is Safety first... always. In that case the decision from the FAA was sound, but definitely more a political decision than a technical one.

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