

# RUSSIAN FLYING FORTRESSES

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The Soviet aircraft industry really like building big. And the Russians can still claim the title of world's largest aircraft, with the Antonov AN-225 heavy lift transport, which has a larger wingspan than the Airbus A380. But during the 1930s, the Russians were working on a machine that may have dwarfed even the Millennium Falcon.



With a wingspan of **132.5 metres** (a Boeing 747's wingspan is 68.5 m) and **20 propeller engines**, this design is based on a 1932 prototype called the **Kalinin K-7**, which was a Soviet heavy experimental aircraft. The K-7 was designed as a multipurpose civil and military aircraft.

Passengers and payload **were housed in the wing**, with plans to carry up to 128 passengers. Other designs arranged 16 luxury cabins for 64 passengers.

The military version of the aircraft was a real “**flying fortress**”, which emerged 10 years before the American **Boeing B-17**. It had as many as **12 gunner positions**, which included an electric cart running along the tail booms to transport gunners to two tail machine guns. It could carry more than **16 tons of bombs, 112 fully equipped paratroopers** or **8.5 tons of parachute droppable equipment**. While no specs are provided for the 2.5-times-larger version, the original K-7 prototype did fly with a takeoff weight of **38 tonnes**, although the aircraft was destroyed when it crashed in **1933**, and no further prototypes were built.

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