

# Ilyushin Beriyev 50: The Soviet Sentry Flightcraft

The Ilyushin Beriyev 50, also known as the A-50 Mainstay, is a Soviet/Russian airborne early warning and control aircraft (AEW&C). It is based on the Ilyushin Il-76 transport aircraft and is designed to detect and track airborne targets, as well as to direct fighter aircraft to intercept them.



## Ilyushin/Beriyev A-50: The 'Soviet Sentry' (FlightCraft Book 6) by Yefim Gordon

★★★★☆ 4.3 out of 5

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The A-50 has been in service with the Soviet and Russian Air Forces since 1984, and has been exported to several other countries. It has been used in a variety of conflicts, including the Gulf War, the Yugoslav Wars, and the Syrian Civil War.

## Development

The A-50 was developed in the early 1980s as a replacement for the Tupolev Tu-126 Moss AWACS aircraft. The Tu-126 was a converted Tu-95 bomber, and was not as capable as the A-50. The A-50 was designed to be

a dedicated AEW&C aircraft, and was equipped with a more powerful radar and a more advanced electronics suite. The A-50 also had a longer range and a higher endurance than the Tu-126.



## Design

The A-50 is a large, four-engine aircraft. It has a long, slender fuselage and a high, swept-back wing. The aircraft is powered by four Soloviev D-30KP turboprop engines. The A-50 has a crew of five: two pilots, one navigator, one weapons systems officer, and one electronic warfare officer.

The A-50 is equipped with a large, rotating radar dome mounted on the top of the fuselage. The radar dome houses a phased-array radar, which is capable of detecting and tracking airborne targets at long ranges. The A-50 also has a variety of other sensors, including an electronic support

measures (ESM) system, an infrared search and track (IRST) system, and a laser rangefinder.

## **Operational history**

The A-50 has been used in a variety of conflicts, including the Gulf War, the Yugoslav Wars, and the Syrian Civil War. In the Gulf War, A-50s were used to provide early warning of Iraqi air attacks. In the Yugoslav Wars, A-50s were used to track NATO aircraft and to direct Serbian fighter aircraft to intercept them. In the Syrian Civil War, A-50s have been used to track rebel aircraft and to direct Syrian fighter aircraft to intercept them.

The A-50 is a versatile and capable AEW&C aircraft. It has been in service for over 30 years, and has proven its worth in a variety of conflicts. The A-50 is likely to remain in service for many years to come.

## **Specifications**

- Crew: 5
- Length: 46.6 m (152 ft 10 in)
- Wingspan: 50.5 m (165 ft 8 in)
- Height: 14.8 m (48 ft 7 in)
- Empty weight: 75,000 kg (165,347 lb)
- Max takeoff weight: 117,000 kg (257,940 lb)
- Engines: 4 × Soloviev D-30KP turbofan engines
- Thrust: 117.7 kN (26,450 lbf) each
- Maximum speed: 900 km/h (560 mph) at 11,000 m (36,000 ft)

- Cruise speed: 750 km/h (470 mph) at 10,000 m (33,000 ft)
- Range: 5,000 km (3,100 mi) with 2 hours on station
- Endurance: 9 hours
- Service ceiling: 12,000 m (39,000 ft)
- Radar: Vega M phased-array radar
- Armament: None

## Variants

There are several variants of the A-50 in service.

- **A-50**: The original version of the A-50, entered service in 1984.
- **A-50U**: An upgraded version of the A-50, with a new radar and electronics suite. Entered service in 1995.
- **A-50EI**: An export version of the A-50U, sold to India and China.
- **A-50M**: A modernized version of the A-50U, with a new radar and electronics suite. Entered service in 2011.

## Operators

The A-50 is in service with the following countries:

- Russia
- India
- China
- Algeria

- Egypt
- Libya
- Vietnam

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