

WAR IN UKRAINE: RUSSIAN AIR TRANSPORTATION WILL CHANGE DRAMATICALLY



Last week, the EU announced a ban on the sale, lease, transfer or export of aircraft and any components to Russia following the country's invasion of Ukraine. The ban applies not only to new contracts, but also to existing leasing contracts that are terminated within 30 days.

Moreover, the American company Boeing announced the suspension of technical support for Russian airlines, the provision of spare parts and maintenance of its aircraft with Russia.

The Impact on Russian Air Transportation

According to experts, as a result, **Russia will have to abandon the operation of both European-made Airbus and American-made Boeing aircraft.**

According to the Federal Air Transport Agency, there are 337 aircraft registered in the EU and 308 American aircraft in the fleet of Russian airlines. In total, Russian carriers operate 980 passenger aircraft, 777 of which are leased (both from foreign and Russian lessors). More than half of these 777 aircraft are leased from foreign companies.

While this is obviously a big setback for the Russian air transportation industry, experts in Russia believe that the sector will be able to survive, since during the winter season flights do not operate as much, while in three months, at the start of the summer season, the situation could be significantly different, especially from a political perspective.

The Question of Spare Parts

"An important question is whether Russia will be able to purchase spare parts and engines from third countries. Will Russia be able to legitimately repair and maintain those foreign aircraft that it still has?" the head of Avia.ru, Roman Gusarov, asked.

The fact is that part of the mainline Boeings and Airbuses are leased from subsidiaries of Russian banks. This means that they will not need to be returned abroad, they can continue to be used. But without repair and spare parts - not for long, until the first breakdown or the first scheduled repair.

Technically, Russia could handle the repair itself, Gusarov says. But to do this without the permission and certificates of the manufacturer, in his opinion, is not worth it.

As the expert explains, the violation of aircraft maintenance regulations, which will emerge during the next inspection of the ICAO commission, will lead to a ban on Russia, in general, to fly anywhere. And even more - not a single foreign company will be able to fly to Russia for this reason. The Russian sky will simply be closed because it will be recognized as unsafe.

This would mean complete air isolation for Russia. And in the future, it will be very difficult to regain the trust of the international aviation community, when the situation with the aircraft is somehow

resolved.

Is Russia Self-sufficient?

Thus arises the question: is Russia self-sufficient in the air transportation sector? Yes and no. While it is true that there is the MS-21 mainline aircraft, which was created to replace Boeings and Airbuses, at this point it is unlikely to do so.

For it to really replace foreign aircraft, it will take time. Even if mass production of the MS-21 is launched this or next year, this is not a complete victory.

Serial production of liners is initially low. In the first year, four MS-21s can be produced, then six, then ten, etc. It is clearly impossible to quickly replace the departure of about 600-700 foreign mainline aircraft.

This means that Russia will need time - not a year or two, but decades - to switch to MS-21 and regain all mainline transportation. In this transitional time, the construction of air transportation almost from scratch will need the help of foreign airlines, who could help transport Russians on foreign routes.

Finally, at least part of the domestic traffic will also have to be given to foreign carriers with long-haul aircraft in the fleet and the ability to fly long distances. The number of airlines in Russia will have to be drastically reduced from 20 to at least five, experts say.

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