The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Iran to Ban Tu-154 Flights

By The Moscow Times

January 16, 2011



TEHRAN, Iran — Iran will ban flights by Tu-154 aircraft from February following a series of disasters involving the Russian-built jets in the Islamic state, the semi-official Mehr news agency reported Saturday.

Reza Nakhjavani, head of the Civil Aviation Organization, ordered four Iranian airlines to stop flying Tupolev-154s from Feb. 20 due to past crashes and the expiry of airworthiness documents.

"Using Tupolev-154 planes is forbidden because of the recent air incidents and the expiry of the service date of this type of aircraft on Feb. 19," Nakhjavani said in a letter.

Altogether, 17 Tu-154s, owned by the Iran Air Tour, Kish Air Eram and Taban airlines, are currently in service in Iran.

Iranian airlines have been dogged by accidents in recent years, prompting calls for a revamp of the country's air fleet, which also includes many U.S.-built Boeings acquired before the

1979 Islamic revolution.

U.S. sanctions bar the sale of Boeing airliners to Iran and hinder the acquisition of other aircraft, many of which rely on U.S.-built engines or other components. Iran has turned to Russia and Ukraine for cheaper planes.

The last major air accident in Iran involving a Tupolev was in July 2009 when a Caspian Airlines aircraft bound for Armenia caught fire in mid-air and crashed into farmland near the city of Qazvin, killing all 168 people on board.

Iranian legislators have repeatedly called for tighter aircraft safety controls and an end to the use of planes from the countries of the former Soviet Union.

One of the country's worst air accidents happened in 2003 when an Iranian Il-76 troop carrier crashed, killing all 276 Revolutionary Guard soldiers and crew aboard.

In 2002, a Yak-40 plane carrying 30 people, including the transport minister and seven lawmakers, crashed near the northern town of Sari killing all on board.

At least 77 people died on Jan. 9 when an Iran Air Boeing 727 crashed while attempting to land in bad weather.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/01/16/iran-to-ban-tu-154-flights-a4224