The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Governor to Aeroflot: Hold the Jet

June 13, 2011



For regular travelers, running late for a flight means missing it. But in the case of Irkutsk Governor Dmitry Mezentsev, it suggests that the whole plane has to wait.

An Aeroflot flight to Moscow was forced to wait on the runway in Irkutsk for an hour last week to allow Mezentsev to catch the plane, airline spokesman Andrei Sorgin said on Ekho Moskvy radio on Sunday.

The forced delay apparently did not go down well with the plane's pilots, who under international aviation rules have the final say on what happens on the aircraft they are piloting.

Prominent blogger Rustem Agadamov uploaded a one-minute audio recording of the pilot bickering with the air traffic controller, who announced the delay.

"I have locked the doors and will not let anyone else board the plane," the pilot said.

The air traffic controller replied: "Well, then we won't let you leave."

The pilot then demands that journalists be dispatched to the plane, but apparently none arrived because the incident, which took place Wednesday, was only reported last weekend.

Agadamov did not specify how he obtained the recording.

Sorgin said the governor apologized to the passengers via the plane's loudspeakers after boarding and that none of them had complained. But he acknowledged that they had the right to sue.

Such delays are illegal but widespread, the head of the air traffic controllers union, Yury Batagov, told Ekho Moskvy. He said he personally has faced similar delays when flying from the Rostov region and having to wait for the local governor to board.

Irkutsk's governor has not commented publicly about the delay.

State-owned Aeroflot did not specify the number of people on board, but Agadamov said it was a regular Irkutsk-Moscow flight served by A-320 jet with a maximum capacity of 180 passengers.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/06/13/governor-to-aeroflot-hold-the-jet-a7556