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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

UTair Signs $2Bln Deal to Buy 20 Airbus Planes

By The Moscow Times

July 11, 2012



UTair Airlines on Thursday signed a $2.07 billion contract to acquire 20 Airbus A321 planes, Interfax reported.

The new 220-seater planes will be used for popular international tourist destinations and domestic flights. The first of them should be delivered in 2013.

"The contract with Airbus for new planes shows our firm intent to sustain high growth rates and strengthen our position among the Russian aviation market leaders," UTair quoted its CEO, Andrei Martirosov, as saying.

He added that the A321s would help the airline guarantee a high level of flight safety, improve services and develop the transportation network.

Airbus said that UTair is a new client in Russia and that it hoped for long-term cooperation

with the airline.

UTair's fleet includes more than 200 fixed-wing aircraft and 340 helicopters.

UTair is part of UTair Group, one of Russia's top three airlines in terms of passenger traffic. The group carried 6.7 million passengers in 2011, and it operates scheduled and charter flights to more than 30 countries, with 61 domestic and 39 international routes.

In addition to UTair, the group also includes UTair-Express, UTair-Ukraine, UTair-Cargo, Turukhan, Nefteyugansky Obyedinenny Aviaotryad, Vostok, Peru-based Helisur, UTair Europe (Slovakia), UTair South Africa, and UTair India.

Blob

An Aeroflot subsidiary specializing in VIP charter flights was one of seven airlines to have its operating certificate withdrawn.

The Federal Air Transportation Agency announced the annulment of JetAlliance East's certificate Thursday.

JetAlliance East, a joint venture between Aeroflot and Austria's JetAlliance founded in 1996 as Aeroflot Plus, had its certificate suspended in September 2011. The certificate was reinstated after a legal challenge the following month.

The latest cancellation is due to the expiration of a three-month provisional period, the air transportation agency said.

The airline's fleet of Cessna light aircraft is already for sale, Interfax reported.

Jet-2000, another luxury charter flight operator among the victims of Thursday's cull, lost its license because of "violations of conditions for certification in Russia."

The airline had been one of the largest players on the business aviation market.

Other disqualified companies include Avialesokhrana, which flies forest rangers and firefighters in the Altai republic, the now-defunct budget airline Avianova, and Vertical-T, a Tver-based helicopter operator.

Grozny Avia and Kirov Airlines had their licenses withdrawn in connection with internal restructuring.

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