

Armenian Airline to Drop Superjet 100

By [Rachel Nielsen](#)

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The Superjet 100 has racked up safety incidents since its commercial launch. **Denis Grishkin**

Armenian national airline Armavia, the first buyer of the Sukhoi Superjet 100, says it wants to return the midrange aircraft to the manufacturer because of technical problems.

United Aircraft Corporation's Sukhoi Civilian Aircraft, however, says the matter is a financial disagreement.

The dispute further complicates the sales of the Superjet, a regional civilian jetliner, which has racked up [safety incidents](#) since its commercial launch in April 2011.

[The most recent problem](#) occurred last week, when a Superjet flown by Aeroflot made an emergency landing at Sheremetyevo Airport at the end of a Kazan-Moscow flight after the cabin partly depressurized, RIA-Novosti reported.

RBC Daily first [reported](#) Monday that Armavia wasn't flying the first Superjet that it had purchased. Armavia owner Mikhail Bagdasarov [confirmed](#) that fact to Armenian news service

ArmInfo, saying he didn't want the plane because it doesn't comply with government standards.

The controversy comes four weeks after an Armavia spokeswoman told Interfax that the airline wouldn't buy a second Superjet 100 as planned. Both the first and second planes are currently in the Moscow region town of Zhukovsky, near Domodedovo Airport, RBC Daily said.

An Armavia spokeswoman in Yerevan said Tuesday that she couldn't provide immediate comment on the controversy.

A spokesman for Sukhoi Civilian Aircraft, Andrei Muravyov, said the firm hadn't officially received word from Armavia that the airline was rejecting the first plane, which has been in service since April 2011.

He said by phone that Armavia didn't like the contract conditions offered to it, which included "a discount."

Armavia hasn't paid for the first plane in full, and it is "supposed to accept" the delivery of the second this year, Muravyov said.

If Armavia does reject the planes, "it wouldn't be pretty" for Sukhoi, since the airline was the first Superjet buyer, Metropol transport analyst Andrei Rozhkov said.

The perception among pilots is that the Superjet 100 hasn't yet been developed to the same level as foreign-made planes, Rozhkov said.

In May, there was a deadly crash of the plane in Indonesia that killed all of the nearly 50 people onboard. Sukhoi was operating that flight as a demonstration for potential buyers.

Independent directors at Aeroflot have suggested that the airline should avoid paying an annual fee of tens of millions of dollars to the Federal Air Transportation Agency, Vedomosti reported Tuesday.

The fee could be roughly 4.5 billion rubles (\$143 million) a year, and independent director Sergei Alexashenko floated the idea of blocking the payment prior to the company's July 26 board of directors meeting. Alexei Navalny, the opposition activist who recently joined the airline's board, backed the idea, as did several members of Aeroflot's management, the newspaper reported.

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