

Ministry Unveils Bill Opening Skies to Foreign Pilots

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Transportation Ministry unveiled a bill seeking to allow airlines to hire foreigners as command pilots in an effort to combat a shortage of specialists, but experts said the proposed quota is too low.

"There is a need for command pilots; otherwise the industry will stall," Aeroflot CEO Vitaly Savelyev said, Vedomosti reported.

Under the amendments, the government would determine the quota. The ministry proposed setting it at 200 command pilots, to be valid for five years, according to a document published on the ministry's official website, Vedomosti reported Thursday.

The ministry said that there is a shortage of 150 to 200 command pilots and that it would be impossible to close the gap soon because training takes from five to seven years.

Experts welcomed the move but said the proposed quota of 200 would not cover airlines' needs, Vedomosti reported.

"Two hundred is not enough, but it's hard to predict how many extra pilots we'd need," the head analyst at Aviaport, Oleg Panteleyev, told Vedomosti.

"Already by the end of 2013 there will be a need to hire about 1,000 command pilots," Boris Rybak, CEO of Russian consulting company Infomost, told Vedomosti.

He said that if the government allocates pilots according to a set quota, then most foreign pilots will end up at Aeroflot.

Transaero first deputy CEO Dmitry Stolyarov said that given the projected growth, the industry would require at least 1,400 new pilots. He also said that because of staff departures, it will need up to 2,100 people.

Stolyarov said there is nowhere to get this many pilots.

The president of pilots union at Sheremetyevo Airport, Igor Deldyuzhev, says the government should relieve the shortage by recruiting more people to flight schools and retraining military pilots. He said attracting staff from abroad will result in flight school closures.

A representative of S7 Airlines said the company has no shortage of pilots, but is in favor of the ministry's initiative, Vedomosti reported.

The amendments apply only to command pilots, not flight attendants or co-pilots, the document states.

A ministry official said the amendments had been submitted for review by other departments.

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