

# U.S Truck Maker Looks to Expand Sales in Russia

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U.S.-based company International Trucks is resuming sales of its brand new commercial vehicles in Russia despite a lull in demand on the Russian market.

Some of the ProStar trucks are already on their way to Russia and are already roadworthy, said Elissa Maurer, a spokeswoman for Navistar International Corporation, International's parent company.

She declined to name the number of trucks that International Trucks expects to export to Russia annually.

The company has supplied Russia with used trucks for the past five years through a dealer network in the country, selling 200 units last year alone, Maurer said in comments e-mailed Wednesday. It plans to carry on with the business.

A semi-knock-down kit assembly line for International Trucks operated at a plant near St. Petersburg before shutting down in 2007, Mauer said.

ProStar trucks are on display this week at the Comtrans exhibition of commercial vehicles at Crocus Expo.

More than 70,000 ProStar trucks are on the road in North America, Navistar said in a statement.

“Russia is experiencing economic growth, and we are excited to offer our customers a proven vehicle that can support them as their businesses grow,” Tom Clevinger, Navistar's global senior vice president, said in the statement.

Economic growth, however, is decelerating and could reach one of its lowest points. Russia's Economic Development Ministry downgraded its forecast recently to say that the economy would expand 1.8 percent this year

The Russian market for new commercial vehicles declined 11.4 percent to 145,000 units in the first six months of the year, compared to the same period last year, according to market researcher Avtostat.

Of that number, heavy trucks accounted for 38,700 units, which is a drop of 17 percent from the previous year.

Some foreign truck manufacturers hope to ramp up their sales, despite the ebbing tide. Japan's largest truck maker, Hino, plans to deliver 2,400 trucks to customers this year, up from 2,000 last year, Vedomosti reported Tuesday.

Part of the Toyota group, Hino will consider producing some of its vehicles in Russia — on its own or with a local partner — if sales here reach 5,000 units a year, the report said, citing the company's sales director in Russia, Yuri Zorin.

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