

Foreigners Stranded in Russia's Remote Far East as U.S.-Bound Flight Makes Emergency Landing

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Air India Boeing 777 **Charlie** (CC BY 2.0)

An Air India flight from New Delhi to San Francisco on Tuesday was forced to make an emergency landing in the Far East Russian city of Magadan due to an engine malfunction.

After disembarking, the flight's passengers — most of whom are likely citizens of India and the U.S. — found themselves stranded in a remote town, unable to pay for food or other goods due to Western sanctions on Russia.

“When they were landing, they felt the plane hitting a hole [in the runway] — that was their first impression of Magadan. Second — they went through our [run-down] airport. Third — there are no hotels,” [said](#) regional head Sergei Nosov, admitting that the unexpected arrival of foreign visitors exposed a number of issues faced by the remote, sparsely populated region.

Most of the 216 passengers and 16 crew who were on board the Boeing 777 were placed in makeshift accommodations at a school in the nearby town of Sokol due to a lack of hotel rooms in Magadan, a regional capital of some 90,000 people.

A viral [video](#) shared by a stranded passenger showed people laying next to each other on thin mattresses laid across school classrooms and hallways.

“They are ok, they are waiting in a nearby school, the hall is heated and [they] got some breakfast,” Tithy Sahu, a resident of California whose parents were on the flight, wrote in a Facebook [group](#) where U.S.-based relatives are looking for their stranded loved ones.

But a few passengers with children were accommodated at a local hotel, according to Governor Nosov.

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A post shared by Холод (@holod.media)

Passenger Girvaan Kaahma, 16, [told](#) Al Jazeera that he and his family were barred from leaving the hotel, likely due to Russian immigration officials' concerns.

Kaahma added that they were unable to buy additional food at their temporary accommodations because Russia has been cut off from international payment systems due to its war in Ukraine.

Air India [announced](#) Wednesday that a replacement flight loaded with essential items and food for passengers had left Mumbai and is scheduled to take passengers from Magadan to San Francisco on Thursday.

News of the U.S.-destined plane's emergency landing in Russia initially sparked widespread fears that Russian officials could take U.S. citizens on board hostage — a response also prompted by the ongoing [detention](#) of American journalist Evan Gershkovich.

Air India is among a few carriers from Asia, the Middle East and China who continue to use Russian airspace when flying to the U.S. despite a mutual air space use ban introduced by Washington and Moscow in the wake of the war in Ukraine.

U.S. State Department deputy spokesman Vedant Patel [said](#) Tuesday that the U.S. government is “aware” of the incident and is monitoring the situation closely, though Patel said he was not able to confirm exactly how many U.S. passport holders are currently stranded in Magadan.

The emergency landing by a U.S.-made aircraft also raised questions over how quickly the plane could be fixed in Russia, where Western sanctions targeting the country's aviation sector have cut off supplies of many spare aircraft parts.

Last year, Russian airlines were forced to perform 2,000 flights on Western aircraft with expired parts amid the absence of new supplies, [according](#) to federal transportation authorities.

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