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Russian Airlines Invited to Launch Flights to North Korea – Reports

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Pyongyang International Airport. **Lu Ban (CC BY-SA 4.0)**

Russian airlines have been invited to launch regular flights to North Korea, the Kommersant business daily reported Monday.

Russia's state civil aviation agency Rosaviatsia sent offers to airlines Aeroflot and Aurora to assess their readiness to launch flights to Pyongyang, Kommersant said, citing unspecified sources.

A Rosaviatsia delegation visited counterparts in North Korea last week to discuss the expansion of air traffic between the two countries.

Currently, the only direct commercial air connection between the two countries is an Air Koryo flight linking Vladivostok and Pyongyang twice per week.

Aurora confirmed to Kommersant their "theoretical readiness" to fly to North Korea.

"In the new foreign policy realities, Russia is forming new partnerships, the construction and

development of which without direct flights from Moscow is not very comfortable," Oleg Panteleyev, head of the AviaPort aviation think tank, told Kommersant. "The main interest in such flights, from business and political circles, is in Moscow."

Russia, under increasing global sanctions, has sought to cultivate deeper ties with North Korea, leading to concerns about the heavily isolated state supplying Russia with arms for its ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

Regular flights from Russia would make it easier to send Russian delegations from Moscow to Pyongyang and vice versa.

Flights between the two countries restarted in August 2023, after a years-long break due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

Panteleyev told Kommersant that because Russian airlines do not have small planes capable of flying non-stop between Moscow and Pyongyang and there is not enough demand for large planes, he expected flights would connect through Vladivostok.

Industry sources told Kommersant that most flights from Pyongyang carry construction workers to Russia.

Tour operators have not yet received any requests to restore tours to the country. Two large Moscow tour agencies told Kommersant that before the pandemic, they could bring groups of 10 to 15 people to North Korea every six months, but they do not expect leisure travel to resume until at least 2024.

Last month, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov recommended that Russian tourists vacation in North Korea.

However, a source in the tourism industry told Kommersant they do not expect more than a few thousand Russians to travel to North Korea per year. In contrast, 4.6 million Russians visited Turkey in 2022.

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