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Russia's Superjet Airliner Completes First Test Flight With Domestic Engine

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Rostec

Russia's Superjet airliner completed its first test flight using the domestically produced PD-8 engine, state defense and industrial conglomerate Rostec announced Monday.

The Sukhoi Superjet 100 — recently rebranded as the SJ-100 — is central to Russia's efforts to develop a domestic commercial aircraft industry after Western sanctions hobbled its aviation sector.

The SJ-100 must reportedly replace 40 foreign-made components and undergo around 200 test flights to assess performance, safety and efficiency before it can be certified for mass production.

Monday's test flight, which took place in the Far Eastern city of Komsomolsk-on-Amur, lasted around 40 minutes, reaching speeds of 500 kilometers per hour (310 miles per hour) and an altitude of 3,000 meters (9,800 feet), according to Rostec.

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"The [PD-8] engine is a crucial element of our import substitution program — it's the 'heart' of the aircraft," Rostec CEO Sergei Chemezov was quoted as saying in a company press release.

"The project is being completed in a very short amount of time by global aviation industry standards. After 2022, the Superjet had to be practically reassembled from scratch," he added, referring to Western sanctions imposed after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine.

Flight testing will pave the way for Russia's existing Superjet fleet to be retrofitted with PD-8 engines, said Vadim Badekha, CEO of United Aircraft Corporation (UAC), which took over the SJ-100 project last year following production delays and safety concerns.

The PD-8 engine is expected to receive certification this fall, according to United Engine Corporation CEO Alexander Grachyov.

Meanwhile, Russia's MC-21 medium-range passenger jet is preparing for its first test flight with the Russian-made PD-14 engine in June, Trade and Industry Minister Anton Alikhanov said. Rostec previously said that the MC-21 — comparable to the Boeing 737 and Airbus A320 — first flew with the PD-14 engine in late 2020.

Russia has pledged more than $2.7 billion to develop domestic aircraft, including the SJ-100 and MC-21. Chemezov said mass production of the MC-21 is expected to begin in 2026.

Authorities in Russia aim to manufacture over 600 aircraft by 2030 to replace its aging Western-built fleet, but concerns remain over production capacity and delivery timelines.

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