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Russia Needs to Replace Hundreds of Foreign-Made Planes By 2030, Rostec Chief Warns

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Russia will need to replace hundreds of foreign-made civil aircraft in the coming years as its fleet of Western planes reaches the end of its lifespan, warned Sergei Chemezov, the head of state-owned defense conglomerate Rostec.

At least 200 of the remaining Western planes operated by Russian carriers — cut off from maintenance and spare parts due to wartime sanctions — will need to be retired and replaced with domestically produced aircraft by 2030, Chemezov told reporters at the annual congress of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs.

The real number may be even higher, he said, noting that Rostec is just starting its talks with airlines to assess the state of their fleets.

Chemezov's remarks suggest that nearly 30% of Russia's Western-built passenger planes could be grounded within the next five years.

Russia's commercial fleet includes around 700 Boeing and Airbus jets, which handle 90% of the country's air travel.

Sanctions have already forced airlines to retire 58 aircraft, according to Dmitry Yadrov, head of Russia's aviation authority Rosaviatsia.

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He said last week that the loss of planes was partly due to a spike in aviation incidents following the introduction of Western restrictions.

The independent Novaya Gazeta Europe news website recorded 208 aviation incidents in Russia in the first 11 months of 2024, putting 2024 on pace for a 25% increase over the previous year. At least 90 of these cases involved system failures like engine or landing gear malfunctions.

Since the start of 2025, at least 10 Russian aircraft have suffered in-flight breakdowns and issued distress signals. Between Dec. 1, 2024, and Jan. 20, 2025, 11 aircraft experienced engine failures, including eight Boeing and Airbus jets and three Russian-made Superjets.

Industry insiders told the U.S.-funded RFE/RL news outlet that Russia's civil aviation industry cannot perform routine maintenance checks on its Western-made planes because the procedures require direct cooperation with manufacturers, which have cut ties with Russian airlines.

"I don't have exact data on the lifespan of all Russian aircraft, but 2025 will be the last year of legal operation for most of them," a Russian flight safety expert told RFE/RL, requesting anonymity due to the sensitivity of the topic.

The parts shortage will even affect Russia's domestically assembled Superjets, which rely on Western-made components like engines, avionics, electrical systems, landing gear and fuel systems. Russian airlines currently operate 150 Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircraft.

Russian authorities announced an ambitious plan to revive the country's aviation industry in response to the Western sanctions imposed over the invasion of Ukraine. By 2030, they aimed to produce about 1,000 commercial aircraft, ramping up output to levels not seen since the Soviet era — 120 planes per year by 2026 and more than 200 annually by 2028.

Under the plan, airlines were supposed to receive two import-substituted Sukhoi Superjets and three Tupolev Tu-214 jets in 2023, followed by 20 more Superjets, seven Tu-214s, six regional MC-21 airliners and two Ilyushin Il-114-300 turboprops in 2024.

In reality, only five aircraft — three Tu-214s and two Il-96-300s — have rolled off production lines in the past three years, according to the Kommersant business daily.

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