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Russia's Ural Airlines to Extend Airbus A320 Lifespan Amid Parts Shortages

February 12, 2026



Denis Grishkin / Moskva News Agency

Russia's Ural Airlines said it will launch what it described as a first-of-its-kind domestic program to extend the service life of Airbus A320 family aircraft beyond 96,000 flight hours, as the country's aviation sector grapples with Western sanctions and a shortage of spare parts.

The carrier said work would be carried out at its own maintenance facility and would include full disassembly, inspection, airframe repairs and final reassembly beginning in autumn 2026.

In a statement cited by the exiled news outlet Agentstvo, the airline said no comparable comprehensive program exists in Russia.

It called the initiative a "logical continuation" of its engineering development and "a major step forward for the domestic aviation industry."

Ural Airlines added that it is also designing workshops to repair fuel, hydraulic and pneumatic systems.

Industry specialists have raised safety concerns over the scheme.

Aviation journalist Andrei Menshenin told Agentstvo that extending aircraft life cycles at centers not certified by the manufacturer moves planes further away from international safety standards.

Related article: Russia Restores Old Planes to Address Growing Airline Fleet Shortages

Aviation expert Vadim Lukashevich wrote on Facebook that Ural Airlines already had "invaluable practical experience" dismantling Airbus A320 jets after two emergency landings in fields in 2018 and 2023, when aircraft had to be removed in parts.

"One can only hope this 'major step forward' comes without human casualties," he wrote.

The program comes as Russia faces an acute shortage of spare parts and new aircraft following Western sanctions imposed over the Kremlin's war in Ukraine.

Russia appealed to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) in September 2025 to ease restrictions needed to maintain the airworthiness of more than 700 Boeing and Airbus aircraft.

Efforts to replace foreign-made jets with domestically produced models have faltered, with Reuters reporting that only one of 15 aircraft scheduled for delivery in 2025 was completed.

The scale of strain in the sector is reflected in safety data.

According to Novaya Gazeta Europe and the Aviaincident channel, the number of aviation incidents in 2025 involving technical faults that disrupted flights quadrupled from the previous year to 800 cases.

In late January 2026 alone, four Russian aircraft made emergency landings in a single week due to in-flight problems.

Vladimir Kovalsky, head of Russia's aviation watchdog Gosavianadzor, said in early February that there was a trend of serious violations in civil aviation.

The operation of more than 480 aircraft — about half the fleet — had been suspended over breaches between 2023 and 2025, Kovalsky noted, calling it a "systemic problem."

He added that Gosavianadzor has recorded falsified maintenance records, repairs carried out without authorized organizations and what he called a lowering of the threshold for acceptable violations.

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