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Fleet Groundings Mount at Several Russian Airlines as Sanctions Strain Maintenance – Kommersant

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Yaroslav Chingaev / Moskva News Agency

Several Russian airlines are operating with unusually high numbers of grounded aircraft as Western sanctions continue to complicate access to spare parts and maintenance, the Kommersant newspaper reported Monday.

An analysis by the business daily found that about one-fifth of the aircraft operated by Russia's 11 largest airlines were not in service this summer. However, that figure is heavily skewed by a small number of carriers facing acute maintenance challenges. Excluding state-controlled Aeroflot Group, which has kept most of its fleet flying, nearly 30% of aircraft operated by the remaining major airlines were grounded, according to the newspaper.

The figures underscore the uneven impact of sanctions imposed after Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine. While flagship carriers such as Aeroflot and low-cost subsidiary Pobeda continue to operate most of their fleets, airlines with larger numbers of newer Western-built

aircraft have struggled to obtain engines, spare parts and maintenance support.

S7, Russia's largest private airline, has been hit the hardest among the country's major scheduled carriers.

Around 32% of its fleet was out of service, largely because of engine problems affecting Airbus A320neo aircraft, Kommersant reported.

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Other airlines have also experienced elevated grounding rates. About 44% of Nordwind's aircraft were reportedly not flying this summer, including several long-haul Airbus A330s and Boeing 777s.

At Azur Air, Russia's largest charter carrier, only six of its 23 aircraft had been cleared to resume operations following inspections by the federal aviation regulator after serious engine issues were identified, leaving roughly 74% of its fleet grounded.

Several smaller carriers were also operating with reduced fleets. Around 20% of aircraft at Ural Airlines, 15% at Utair, 19% at Red Wings and 21% at Azimut were out of service, according to the newspaper. Azimut said it was operating all aircraft available after scheduled maintenance.

By contrast, Aeroflot Group appeared largely insulated from the disruptions. Around 11% of its combined fleet was grounded, though most idle aircraft belonged to subsidiary Rossiya.

Aeroflot's mainline operation had only about 4% of its aircraft out of service, while Pobeda was operating its entire fleet, according to Kommersant.

Industry experts quoted by the newspaper said the current level of groundings remains manageable given that Russian airlines have been operating under Western sanctions for more than four years.

They cautioned, however, that fleet availability could deteriorate from 2027 as aircraft age and components reach the end of their service lives, with Russian-built Sukhoi Superjet 100 regional jets expected to face particular maintenance challenges.

Western sanctions imposed after Moscow's invasion of Ukraine cut Russian airlines off from aircraft manufacturers, spare parts and many maintenance services, forcing carriers to rely on alternative supply chains, domestic repairs and the cannibalization of some aircraft to keep others in service.

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