

Why Russian pilots flee to Asia?

Russian airlines are concerned about the brain drain of pilots to China and South Korea.

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/EINPresswire.com/ -- Russian airlines

are concerned about the brain drain of pilots to China and South Korea,

[AeroTime reports](#). Among the companies

affected by the problem are S7, Ural Airlines, Volga-Dnepr and VIM-Avia, Russian newspaper Kommersant recently wrote quoting sources in the industry.



According to Russian industry sources, over the past 2.5 years, more than 300 of the "best-trained pilots with excellent English skills" – captains and instructors – have left for greener pastures in Asia. At the same time, around 400 pilots of this caliber are preparing the necessary paperwork, sources say. One of the Kommersant's sources does not exclude that the recent scheduling troubles of VIM-Avia flights could have happened due to the simultaneous departure of 12 captains. The influx of Russian pilots to China coincided with a drop in passenger traffic and Transaero's bankruptcy procedures, a source in a foreign recruitment agency, who recruits pilots for the PRC, noted.

China does provide a number of advantages over the Russian market. The average salary of a pilot is four times higher than in Russia – \$17,000-25,000 per month; 80 flight hours are required per month against 90 in Russia; and vacation starts from 96 days (70 in Russia). It also helps that since 2016 China has simplified the issuance of work permits to pilots, which only stimulates the arrival of flight personnel from abroad.

The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) has recently received a petition from Russian aviation professionals complaining about the "arbitrariness in regards to aviation specialists and training facilities" of the country's Federal Air Transport Agency (Rosaviatsiya), according to Russian media. The petition's authors claim that Rosaviatsiya's actions might lead to a quarter of Russian pilots losing their licenses.

10 Chinese air carriers are open to hiring Russian pilots, mainly they are interested in captains that have logged at least 2500 flight hours, Kommersant's source said. Around 100 captains and instructors are currently flying in China, while as many are preparing to go there to work.

VIM-Avia confirmed the departure of some pilots who now work in China, India and Vietnam. The company believes that this is because in these countries the government has created conditions for attracting foreign pilots, they are not limited by quotas, and local recruitment agencies are looking for pilots in Russia as well as other countries.

At the St. Petersburg International Forum 2017, Aeroflot CEO Vitaly Saveliev reported that the company lacks Russian captains and that "pilots flee to Asia and particularly China, where salaries are 1.5-2 times higher." Aeroflot itself, he said, can no longer raise their salaries. The company now employs 21 foreign pilots with a quota of 80 people. Aeroflot has recently requested a new quota for

40 foreign pilots.

Russia's Ministry of Transport confirmed the trend of the brain drain, and noted that the scale of the problem is not so great, and linked the outflow with "primarily the exchange rate difference". Proposals to prevent the departure of pilots are discussed with the Association of Air Transport Operators (AEVT) and will soon be "submitted for public discussion". The source of the newspaper said that as of now Russian aviation authorities make it difficult for pilots to work abroad only formally – for example, by refusing to confirm to foreign companies the pilots' licenses or to provide other documents, referring to the law on the protection of personal data.

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