



RUSSIAN STARTUP LEASES SINGLE YAK-40 FOR REGIONAL SERVICES

News / Airlines



A Russian startup has wet-leased a Soviet-made Yakovlev Yak-40 regional trijet with the aim of launching scheduled air services between Kyzyl, the capital city of the Republic of Tuva in Siberia, and several destinations in neighboring regions.

The company, registered in May 2017, is known as Ayana Airlines. As the would-be carrier does not hold an air operator's certificate, it is leasing the aircraft with crew from Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky Air Enterprise, and will take care of everything outside the flight operations, such as ticket sales, slot coordination, and passenger services.

Ayana's first route, started on August 1, is from Kyzyl to Ulan-Ude in Buryatia via Krasnoyarsk and Nizhneangarsk. On August 3, it performed its first flight from Kyzyl to [Novosibirsk](#) with virtually all the 30 seats filled. Twice-weekly operations from Kyzyl to Novosibirsk and Krasnoyarsk will continue until the end of September.

"In June 2017 Ayana approached us with the request to wet-lease an aircraft for scheduled operations," the sublessor's CEO Nikolay Plutov told Russian Aviation Insider. "They submitted a preliminary flight schedule. Judging by their projected seat load factor, these destinations were not

sufficiently covered by any local airlines in their region.”

Indeed, Plutov went on, his own company had not consider launching any such routes because “we do not know [Tuva’s] local market well enough.”

Ayana’s predecessor Tuva Airlines used to operate interregional routes with Antonov An-2 single-engine propeller-driven biplanes until the Federal Air Transport Agency put a ban on such flights. The airline still has three Mil Mi-8T helicopters and continues to provide passenger services. It also provides operational support to Ayana Airlines.

Ayana’s initiative also found support with the region’s transport ministry. The parties have been in talks for several months now, since [NordStar](#), a major regional operator, disconnected services between Kyzyl and destinations elsewhere in Siberia for technical reasons.

“We scanned route networks across [Russia](#) and came to the conclusion that Tuva was seriously underloaded,” Ayana CEO So we went to the authorities and offered help. The demand was there,” Ayana’s general director Yevgeny Storozhko said. “In fact, the Yak-40 is really underestimated. Economically it is closer to the [Soviet twin-engined turboprop Antonov] An-24.”

Ayana Airlines hopes it will obtain government subsidies next year to support current operations and further expand its network.

The carrier’s registered capital stands at just 10,000 rubles (\$170).

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