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[July 17, 2012](#)

*“We had lost hope of finding a vendor that could ensure that the airline complied with stringent regulations and technical requirements”, Mark Dudley, InterPacific Aviation*

Yakutia Airlines is a regional Russian airline based in the Eastern Siberian city of Yakutsk, famed for being the coldest inhabited place on earth. The airline has grown and prospered quickly since its founding in 2002. It operates more than 30 modern aircraft, including Boeing 737 and 757, to more than 50 destinations throughout Russia, Europe, Central Asia and East Asia.

Early in 2012, the airline, in conjunction with its partner and representative in the United States, InterPacific Aviation and Marketing, decided to expand its service to include Anchorage, Alaska. The start date of July 12, 2012, was set for the weekly seasonal service. Inauguration of this sporadically served route carried great symbolic, historical, and practical significance; this route would be one of very few direct routes between Russia and the United States and the only one into Eastern Russia. It would establish a convenient and comfortable way for North Americans to reach a great adventure travel destination and arguably the best place for fly-fishing, in the world - the Kamchatka Peninsula. It would reestablish Anchorage, Alaska, to its rightful place as gateway to the Russian Far East, a region with which it has cultural and economic ties going back centuries.

Yakutia Airline successfully went through the rigorous vetting and approval process with Russian authorities as well as the United States Department of Transportation, FAA, CBP and TSA, and had aggressively promoted the route in the six weeks since it was permitted to fly the route. Yet, just a few weeks prior to the inauguration of service, one critical piece of the puzzle was still missing and without it, the service might have to be cancelled or suspended. The airline had no system in place to submit advance passenger and crew information to CBP and TSA! The accelerated timeline to initiate service in time for the 2012 summer travel season left precious little time for the IT, reservations, and security departments of Yakutia Air to take the measures required for compliance with strict CBP and TSA regulations. On the airline's behalf, InterPacific Aviation and Marketing contacted numerous third-party vendors listed in the CBP's APIS vendor list, yet none met the airline's particular needs, timeline and budget. In late June, Mark Dudley, Regional Director of InterPacific Aviation and Marketing, contacted SecurePAX Info, LLC in Boston, Massachusetts, on the recommendation of another third-party vendor.



Mark Dudley, InterPacific Aviation and Marketing, Inc.  
with Linda Close, Pegasus Aviation

*“We had lost hope of finding a vendor that could ensure that the airline complied with stringent regulations and technical reporting requirements. This was all a bit overwhelming for a carrier operating for the first time to the US,” Dudley said. Interfacing the airline's systems with those of CBP and TSA,*

language barriers, time-zones and on a very compressed timeline would be a daunting task. "I was a bit skeptical when SecurePAX assured me that it was feasible to put a system in place with less than 3 weeks to go until launch date", Dudley admitted; nevertheless, Yakutia Air contracted with SecurePAX, initiating several weeks of intense work. The SecurePAX technical support staff worked around the clock with TSA, CBP, and the airline's staff, representatives, and contractors in Japan, Russia, and the US to obtain necessary approvals, create and adapt systems, and to conduct testing and training. TSA's Secure Flight management team estimates that scenario testing alone can take 4-6 weeks; Yakutia Air had just a few days.

Thanks to SecurePAX's established reputation and positive working relationship with the offices involved, TSA agreed to reduce the number of required test scenarios to 17. The final tests, conducted via conference call with actual check-in agents in Anchorage, were completed just 12 hours before the first flight departed Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Russia.

Final approval to deploy automated systems would come over the next week, but Yakutia Air was granted temporary permission to use SecurePAX's "manual" system for matching crew and passenger lists against watch-lists in the interim. "SecurePAX technical assistance was always available. They were there late at night for calls to Russia, they were there for all our conference calls to TSA, they were there to train our ground handlers, and they were there throughout the check-in process for the first flight," Dudley said. "Yakutia Air is indebted to SecurePAX for its critical role in ensuring that the inaugural flight of this high-profile service operated on schedule," he added.

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*Quoted in this story:*

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