

# Авиамост между Магаданом и Анкориджем должен быть возрожден!

## AIR FLIGHTS BETWEEN MAGADAN AND ANCHORAGE SHOULD BE RESTORED

### Magadan Evening (newspaper)

[Назад к списку постов](#)

8 октября 2020 года (Oct. 8, 2020)

Редакция «ВМ»

The distance between the United States and the Russian Federation is much closer than between America and Europe. It takes ten hours to cross the Atlantic from any European airport if the aircraft only flies to New York City. But if the passenger's further route runs to the west coast with transfers, the trip can take much longer. But for residents of the Russian Northeast, a flight to the United States could take much less time. An air trip from Magadan to Anchorage is only four hours. And such a route has existed for more than ten years. Direct flights from Sokol Airport in Magadan to Ted Stevens International Airport in Anchorage began in 1991. Many flights were made by Alaska Airlines and Aeroflot in more than ten years. And passengers could fly quickly and inexpensively between America and the Russian Far East.

Unfortunately, in the early 2000s, after the terrorist attack in New York, as well as the ongoing struggle against international terrorism, this air route was closed. For economic rather than political reasons, it was allegedly disadvantageous to carriers. Now it's hard to say whether it was true or not, but if many passengers used this air route during the nineties, not only residents of the Magadan Region and Alaska, but also residents of other regions, then maybe it's worth considering reviving it? Moreover, the shortest distance between Russia and America in the Bering Strait is only 86 kilometers. And the distance between the Big Diomedes Island, owned by Russia, and the Little Diomedes Island, owned by the USA, does not exceed four kilometers at all. So in winter, you can walk this distance on ice, and in summer cross it on a fishing boat.

But let's be realistic. Indeed, a direct air route between Magadan and Anchorage could be unprofitable. But the revival of this air route will provide an opportunity to strengthen international relations between America and the Russian Far East. Not only residents of Magadan, but also residents of Vladivostok, Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky, Sakhalin could fly to Alaska. In addition, the restored air route between Magadan and Anchorage will facilitate the possibility of an air route to Canada and will help maintain international cargo transportation between Asia and North America.

Therefore, the creation of a passenger, transport, sorting logistics hub, unified in its work for the Magadan Region and Alaska, would give a solid profit both for the budgets of these territories and for the carrier, which would take on all the risks and benefits of the Magadan - Anchorage flight. Because the aircraft bridge between North America and Asia through Russia would be beneficial not only to the USA and the Russian Federation, but also to China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian countries. This project will require considerable investments in the construction of warehouses, the reconstruction of the Magadan airport, as well as the construction of a full-

fledged infrastructure that provides large passenger traffic. But given the low energy tariffs in the Magadan Region, affordable labor and highly qualified professionals in air navigation and services at Sokol Airport, using the location of Magadan may be the most economical and profitable for North American and Asian airlines than cooperation with more expensive airports in Korea and Japan.

But before anyone begins to search and attract investors in Russia and the United States, and then implement this project for direct participants, it is necessary to carry out serious preparatory work. In fact, the common passenger, cargo and logistics hub of Magadan and Anchorage will help connect cities such as Vladivostok, Beijing, Seoul, Tokyo, Vancouver, Toronto, Montreal, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco. And this is only the beginning of the rapprochement of these cities. The geography of connecting routes can be expanded in all directions in this Pacific Asia-North American region.

What is needed to start the implementation of the project? First of all, people interested in the project need to collect and analyze the following data: the total number of passengers flying from Russia, China, Japan, Korea, the USA and Canada; what are the volumes of cargo transportation between these countries; it is also necessary to calculate how much transportation costs for air tickets and cargo costs can decrease, which, of course, will contribute to the economic development of the Russian Far East and Alaska, as the main beneficiaries of this project. Indeed, cheap passenger tickets will become the main attractive factor for investors who are ready to invest in the development of the Russian Far East and Alaska, which is remote from the main US territory.

The development of the tourism business is also important, not only in its extreme forms, accessible only to very wealthy people, but also for tourists of economy class. The ecologically clean nature of the North, both in the Magadan Region and in Alaska, fishing, hunting, seafood, red fish, caviar, crabs, amazing beauty of the northern landscapes, all these factors will certainly lead to the development of tourism in both regions. In addition, the implementation of this project will contribute to the development of the Russian aviation industry. To restore the Magadan - Anchorage flight, it will be very beneficial to purchase subsidized Sukhoi Superjet 100 aircraft for operation in the newly created Alaska - Magadan joint venture. One of the subsidiaries of Aeroflot, Rossiya Airlines, a company that flies from Moscow to Magadan, will be able to partner with Alaska Airlines.

In addition, it is necessary to remember the safety of flights in the Far Eastern region. As noted on August 13, 2018, at the 13th meeting of the volcanic ash exercise steering group in the Far Eastern part of the European region, held in Magadan:

"In the Far Eastern region, volcanic ash clouds during periods of volcanic activity make flights of most of the air routes over Kamchatka and the Pacific Ocean east of the peninsula, as well as over the southern part of the Sea of Okhotsk unsafe. Flows of transit aircraft coming from and to the USA, Canada to Southeast Asia, Japan during such periods are shifted to the safest and most economically advantageous airspace over the territory of the Magadan Region and Chukotka. Some of them are forced to change their itinerary during the flight, choosing, in agreement with the air traffic services, the most acceptable and safe options. "

Thus, the resumption of the air route between Magadan and Anchorage will help save money for annual changes to existing routes that need to be displaced due to the threat of volcanic ash. After all, 50 or 60 foreign passenger and cargo aircraft fly daily through the sky of the Russian Federation in transit to Anchorage. And any change in these air routes connecting the countries of Southeast Asia and North America should be coordinated with the air traffic services of the

Russian Federation before the flight starts, so that there are no delays or financial losses of carriers.

In addition, we must remember the long history of mutual exchanges between the Magadan region and Alaska. These contacts began in the early 1940s, when the legendary ALSIB air route began to operate. The United States delivered weapons, ammunition, and food to the Soviet Union via this airway. American and Russian ferry pilots drove military aircraft from Montana to Alaska and then to the Magadan Region, Siberia to the eastern front. And this route was incredibly difficult for the pilots who drove the planes from Fairbanks to Chukotka, and from there to Seymchan airport, and then through Siberia to the eastern front. Lack of maps, severe meteorological conditions, huge uninhabited distances, sometimes lack of fuel, all these factors sometimes led to breakdowns, disasters and human casualties. Nevertheless, the pilots drove the planes with great risk to their lives. Many Russian and American ferry pilots received military orders and medals for their courageous service, just like their comrades who fought against the Nazis and the Japanese.

If we recall the recent past, friendly relations and cultural cooperation between Magadan and Anchorage were established 31 years ago. In February 1989, Tom Fink, the mayor of Anchorage and Vyacheslav Kobets, the chairman of the Magadan Regional Executive Committee, signed a declaration of friendship between our two cities. Mutual exchange of delegations began in the summer of 1990. Magadan received 48 pilots participating in a memorial flight along the ALSIB highway. The historic sister-cities agreement between Magadan and Anchorage was signed on June 22, 1991. At the same time, the first flight along the Magadan – Anchorage route was operated by Alaska Airlines.

Relations between Russian and American sister cities with a similar history, climate, and fate have been repeatedly confirmed and improved. In 1995, the heads of the administrations of Magadan and Anchorage, Nikolai Karpenko and Rick Mystrom, ushered in a new era of friendship and understanding, which entailed the signing of an agreement on mutual cooperation between the Magadan City Parliament and the Anchorage Assembly. The undoubted benefits were received not only by the interaction of the legislative assemblies, but also by the business community of both cities. Extensive work has been done to develop and maintain the Magadan – Anchorage air route and to simplify the process of obtaining visas for residents of Magadan and Anchorage as part of tourism and business development.

On February 20, 2004, Nikolai Karpenko, the mayor of Magadan and Mark Begich, the mayor of Anchorage, confirmed the twinning declarations between Magadan and Anchorage. Thus, the 13th anniversary of the signing of the twinning agreement was celebrated in order to further maintain friendly relations between Magadan and Anchorage and the mutual trend towards cooperation.

In 2015, a delegation led by Eric Anders Holm – Olsen, US Consul General in the city of Vladivostok, visited Magadan in order to get acquainted with the governor of the Magadan region and the mayor of the city of Magadan, as well as to get acquainted with the history, economy, culture and industry of the city.

In 2017-2018, Michael Keays U.S. Consul General in the city of Vladivostok visited Magadan. The purpose of his visit was a study tour to the Kolyma region. In 2018, writer and journalist David Ramseur visited Magadan.

As a result of his trip, he wrote these words in his book: “From the Pacific seaport in Vladivostok to the Far North, the people we met were delighted with the renewed interactions

with Alaska. Many young Russians were unfamiliar with the Ice Curtain era and were intrigued by the still-active policy of visiting the University of Alaska at reduced rates.

“No matter what the relationship is between our national governments, the model of people’s diplomacy that began a generation ago is being pursued by Alaskans and Russians. Relations can once again be restored while promoting mutual understanding and easing today's tensions,” Ramseur said.

The history of aviation development in the Magadan Region dates back to 1931, when the Dalstroy state trust was created. The following year, it was decided to create regular flights between the central regions of the country and the city of Magadan, which was founded on the banks of the Nagaev Bay in 1929, for which landing sites and water airfields for seaplanes were equipped. Already in 1933, the first airfield was launched. And the following year, the Soviet government transferred four aircraft to the Dalstroy Trust. It was necessary to conduct aerial reconnaissance of this vast, sparsely populated area, to transport goods and people, mainly geologists, builders and pioneers, in the absence of roads and infrastructure. And in this sense, the history of the development of the Magadan region is very similar to the history of the development of Alaska. So the experience gained by the aviators of both territories could become significant in the mutual exchange. It is impossible to overestimate the heroism of the first pilots who mastered both the Magadan region and Alaska. These are true pioneers in the aviation industry.

As already noted, when World War II began, the Magadan Region already had a fairly developed infrastructure for receiving, refueling, inspecting, and necessary repairing aircraft that were transported from the USA to the USSR via the ALSIB route. These are not only airports in Chukotka, but also in the Magadan region, such as: in Seymchan, Gizhiga, Chaybukha and Magadan. The existing Sokol airport in Magadan was opened in 1974 and could simultaneously accommodate 400 passengers. At that time, it was a modern, comfortable airport. Since 1980, direct flights between Magadan and Moscow were opened. And if before this flight lasted more than fourteen hours with a transfer, the non-stop flight was reduced to eight hours.

Currently, Magadan has one of the few modern Russian and international flight control centers in the world equipped with a satellite system for tracking aircraft. Modern radar facilities, new types of radio stations and radios are being commissioned in the region. This was largely due to the active interaction between Magadan and Anchorage in the 1990s and 2000s. The revival of direct flights between our two twin cities will undoubtedly contribute to the further development of the aviation industry, as well as tourism, business and attract investment in the Magadan Region and Alaska, as a common passenger and cargo hub in the Pacific and Asian regions.