



## Iran Aseman Airlines Seeks to Buy Used Airbus Planes as Sanctions Bite

By Tamara Walid - Feb 3, 2011

[Iran](#) Aseman Airlines said it's in negotiations to buy six used Airbus SAS A320 jetliners from an undisclosed seller to renew its fleet and improve safety in a country where sanctions prohibit the purchase of new aircraft.

The 150-seat planes will replace aging Fokker 100s, Ahmad Khalili, general director of support at the airline's technical department, said in an interview, adding that details are confidential because of the "sensitivity" of the issue.

"It's not easy," Khalili said at an aerospace industry show in Dubai. "The Americans will not allow aircraft exports directly to Iran, so we always have to find ways around it."

Carriers including Iran Air have struggled to keep planes flying amid international sanctions outlawing the purchase of spare parts and new jetliners from Airbus and [Boeing Co.](#) The cost of buying planes is high in the absence of access to foreign banks and export credit agencies, so that Iran Aseman will be forced to pay for the A320s in cash, Khalili said.

[Iran Aseman](#), which operates 30 domestic routes and seven international ones, has 19 Dutch-built Fokker 100s manufactured between 1990 and 1995, according to aviation consultant Ascend.

### Western Planes

The fleet also includes four Boeing 727s, six ATR-72 turboprops from Toulouse, France-based Avions de Transport Regional and two Falcon 20 jets built by Dassault Aviation SA, which is also French, according to the carrier's website.

Repair and overhaul is performed at the company's own facility in Iran, and it also has approval for maintenance of Boeing 727 planes registered in the [United Arab Emirates](#) from that country's civil aviation authority, the website says.

Sanctions, imposed by the [United Nations Security Council](#) over [Iran's nuclear program](#), may be contributing to crashes, said [Paul Hayes](#), director of safety at London-based Ascend, which estimates that carriers from the country suffered six fatal incidents from 1.2 million flights in the past decade.

On Jan. 10, a Boeing 727 belonging to national carrier Iran Air crashed near the northern city of Orumiyeh, killing at least 77 people. Iran's parliament dismissed Roads and Transportation Minister Hamid Behbahani Feb. 1 after blaming him for failing to improve road and air safety, state-run news agencies reported.

"The accident rate in Iran is poor compared with other developed countries," Hayes said. "I assume sanctions are causing problems with maintaining and replacing aircraft."

The U.S. and its allies accuse Iran of seeking to develop atomic weapons under cover of a nuclear-power program. Iran rejects the charge and says it needs the technology to secure energy for its growing population.

American measures were intensified in July to target foreign suppliers of [aviation fuel](#) and other refined oil products to Iran and block access to the U.S. financial system for banks doing business with the country.

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