RUSSIA SUSPENDS ALL RUSSIAN AIRLINE FLIGHTS TO EGYPT

News / Airlines



Russia has suspended all Russian airline flights to/from Egypt, citing the ongoing investigation into the Oct. 31 Metrojet Airbus A321 crash.

The sweeping suspension of flights to all of Egypt goes further than the UK and Ireland, which have banned flights to/from Sharm el-Sheikh, from which Metrojet flight 9268 took off bound for St. Petersburg before crashing in the Egyptian Sinai Peninsula, killing all 224 passengers and crew on board. Top UK government officials, including Prime Minister David Cameron, have made strong statements suggesting an explosive device could have brought down the Russian airline's A321.

In response to those statements, Russian officials had been urging caution against drawing conclusions while the flight 9268 investigation was ongoing. But the head of Russian intelligence, Alexander Bortnikov, recommended to Russian President Vladimir Putin on Nov. 6 that Russian airline flights to/from Egypt should be suspended until the cause of the crash is determined. Putin has agreed with the recommendation, according to a Russian government spokesman quoted in news reports.

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Meanwhile, plans to allow airlines to operate 29 relief flights to get UK passengers vacationing in the Sharm el-Sheikh region back home hit a snag Nov. 6 after Egyptian officials said Sharm el-Sheikh Airport couldn't handle the large volume of checked luggage being left behind. The UK is allowing the flights, but without hold baggage—passengers can take carry-on bags only.

Egyptian civil aviation minister Hossam Kamal said only eight UK-bound flights would be allowed Nov. 6. "The British airlines opt to fly without the hold baggage of the British passengers who spent their holidays in Sharm el-Sheikh," Kamal said in a statement. "With this decision, the airport halls' storage will not accommodate for more than 120 tons of left-behind luggage. This big volume will affect the smooth operation of the rest of the domestic and international flights."

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