RUSSIAN OFFICIALS BANNED FROM FLYING WITH FOREIGN AIRLINES ON BUSINESS TRIPS

News / Airlines



Russian officials and State Duma deputies can no longer fly with international airlines on business trips, under an amendment to a presidential decree published Wednesday.

From now on, official trips can only use Russian carriers or the airlines of other members of the Eurasian Economic Union, which comprises Belarus, Kazakhstan, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan.

Officials can only dodge the patriotic option if international airlines are the only ones that fly to the required destinations. The rule does not apply to private trips.

According to an unidentified representative of Aeroflot, the Russian national airline, who was cited by the Vedomosti newspaper, the change was lobbied by the company's chief, Vitaly Savelyev, in February. The representative said such restrictions were common in other countries and would help support Russian airlines, which are under pressure from falling demand during a recession and rising leasing costs thanks to a weak ruble. Leasing agreements are generally denominated in

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U.S. dollars and euros.

In the first half of the year, the number of passengers flying to international destinations with Russian airlines dropped by 15.2 percent, according to data from Russia's Federal Air Transportation Agency.

Public servants reacted to news of the new rules in various ways. Some deputies said they were unreasonable and could increase expenses when, for instance, economy-class tickets are sold out. Others supported the measure as a way to help the country's airlines, according to Vedomosti.

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