

Beat: Technology

Russian airlines banned from flying over Syria after missile attack

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USPA News - Russian airlines were banned Tuesday from flying through Syrian airspace after a passenger aircraft came under fire a day earlier, raising new concerns for commercial airliners which are still flying over a country that has been devastated by an ongoing civil war. The incident occurred on Monday morning when a NordWind Airlines plane carrying 159 passengers was flying from Sharm el-Sheikh, a resort city in Egypt, to Kazan, located in Russia's republic of Tatarstan.

The crew said they had to take evasive action in Syrian airspace to avoid being hit by two ground-to-air missiles, which exploded near the aircraft. While the aircraft was able to land safely, the incident has raised safety concerns for commercial airliners which are still flying through Syrian airspace despite the ongoing civil war. As a result, Russia's Federal Agency for Air Transport on Tuesday decided to ban all Russian airlines from using Syrian airspace. "In order to ensure the safety of the passengers and crew members of civil aircraft of the Russian Federation, the Federal Agency for Air Transport has sent a directive banning the use of airspace belonging to the Syrian Arab Republic," said a statement from Russia's aviation watchdog Rosaviatsia. The agency said it had earlier advised Russian airlines to avoid Syrian airspace, but a number of airlines had ignored the advice and continued operating their flights as scheduled. "The Federal Agency for Air Transport believes that the commercial interests cannot outweigh the issues of security of citizens using the services of Russian airlines," it added. Rosaviatsia said aviation authorities have been instructed to "strictly control" the execution of the decree until further notice. The statement pointed to Siberia Airlines Flight 1812 which crashed in the Black Sea in October 2001 after being hit by a stray Ukrainian missile during live-fire exercises on the Crimean peninsula, killing all 78 people on board.

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