

RUSSIA'S AIRLINE REGULATOR SUSPENDS BOEING 737 FLYING CERTIFICATES

News / Airlines



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Russia's airline regulator said it was suspending flying certificates for Boeing 737s currently in use in the country until it receives notification that the planes are safe to fly.

The statement by the Interstate Aviation Committee (IAC), dated Nov. 4, did not immediately ground flights. A spokesman for Rosaviatsya, Russia's aviation watchdog, which is obliged to comply with IAC safety recommendations, said it had not been notified, so there was no order yet to suspend flights.

The IAC said the certificate suspension would remain in effect until it receives notification from Rosaviatsya and the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration about the safety of Boeing 737 control surfaces on the tail of the aircraft that help steer it.

Late on Thursday, the FAA released a statement noting Russia's concern about the tail control surfaces dated back to a 2013 crash of a 737 operated by Tatarstan Airlines that killed all 50 people on board.

"The FAA is assisting the Russian accident investigation authority as an "advisor" to the NTSB, which was appointed a U.S. 'accredited representative' for the investigation into the 2013 Boeing 737 accident in Kazan, Russia," the FAA said, referring to the U.S. National Transportation Safety Board.

The FAA declined to comment further on the ongoing investigation

The IAC announcement came after an Airbus A321 airliner registered in Ireland but operated by a Russian firm crashed in Egypt on Saturday and killed 224 people, but did not make a link between the certificate suspension and the crash in Egypt. The IAC could not be reached for further comment.

The Rosaviatsya spokesman added that a meeting was planned for Friday between Russian airlines, Rosaviatsya and the IAC - which oversees the aviation industry in some ex-Soviet countries including Russia - about Boeing 737 certificates.

A Boeing Co spokesman in Seattle said the company planned on Friday to "meet with Russian officials to understand their concerns."

There are about 200 Boeing 737s in Russia, according to Reuters calculations based on data from Rosaviatsya, or about a fifth of a total fleet, both passenger and cargo.

The biggest number of 737s is held by private airline Utair, followed by Transaero, which stopped flights last week, and Russia's biggest carrier, state-controlled Aeroflot group. Utair and Aeroflot declined to comment.

The entire fleet of Aeroflot unit Pobeda, a low-cost carrier established last year, is made up of Boeing 737s.

In a separate statement, the IAC said it wanted all foreign planes operating in Russia to be re-registered on home soil, after the plane crash in Egypt.

"Over 95 percent of all foreign aircraft operated in Russia and accounting for over 85 percent of all passenger flights, including Aeroflot, are registered and are in the registers of foreign countries," IAC said.

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