



EASYJET TO HALT MOSCOW FLIGHTS ON SLUMPING DEMAND

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EasyJet Plc will halt flights between London and Moscow as ticket sales are hurt by the combination of a slowing Russian economy and stricter visa-approval procedures.

EasyJet will suspend operations on March 21, while continuing to monitor the situation with a view to resuming the service should demand pick up, the Luton, England-based company said in a statement Friday.

Europe's No. 2 discount carrier has been flying to Moscow from London Gatwick airport since 2012 after being awarded route rights ahead of Virgin Atlantic Airways Ltd. Russia's economy shrank 4.6 percent in the second quarter from a year earlier, while the ruble is down 45 percent against the dollar in 12 months.

"The decision has been taken in response to the significant and sustained reduction in demand," EasyJet said.

With only two carriers from the UK and two from Russia permitted to fly between London and

Moscow under air-services accords, the move could ultimately jeopardize EasyJet's route rights. A review of permissions would be prompted if another airline applied, spokeswoman Anna Knowles said.

IAG SA's British Airways also serves Moscow, while Aeroflot PJSC, Russia's largest airline, and Transaero Airlines, the second-biggest, hold reciprocal rights. A planned merger of the two could allow another Russia operator to start services.

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