

Medvedev Calls for Larger Airlines

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev called Thursday for Russian airlines to be enlarged in a bid to ensure the proper maintenance of their aircraft and the safety of their operations.

Speaking to a presidium of the government, just days after a passenger jet flown by a small regional airline crashed killing 50 people in the city of Kazan, Medvedev made a number of proposals to address safety and efficiency in the sector.

Russia has a total of 122 air carriers, Medvedev said, but 85 to 90 percent of these companies have small fleets, low financial assets and lack flight personnel.

"That is why our goal is to help the development of [Russian] air carriers, including their potential enlargement wherever it is necessary, while encouraging competition," the premier said.

According to the Federal Air Transport Agency, Russian air carriers transported 65,238,689 passengers during the period January to September 2013, up 14.7 percent year on year.

However, 63 percent of those passengers were carried by five major airlines — Aeroflot, Transaero, UTair Aviation, Sibir (S7) and Rossia Airlines.

Medvedev also criticized the virtual monopoly on ground services at Russian airports, which he said made these services inefficient and expensive.

He called for the introduction of procedures for ensuring nondiscriminatory access of providers to the ground handling services and refueling services using airport infrastructure facilities.

Medvedev also called for the development of alternative air transport hubs across the country to the overburdened Moscow hub.

"The situation when three-quarters of passenger flow pass through Moscow is ...absolutely abnormal," the prime minister said.

"It is obvious that we should develop flight routes that would bypass our capital's transport hub," he said.

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