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Russia Restricts Airspace for Ukrainian Airlines

By The Moscow Times

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The Kremlin has been threatening airspace restrictions since EU sanctions grounded a Russian airline.

Ukrainian airlines will be banned from passing through Russian airspace on routes to Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia and Turkey, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Thursday.

Amid a counterattack on Western countries that have sanctioned Russia over the crisis in Ukraine, Medvedev also said U.S. and European airlines could be restricted from using Russia's trans-Siberian transit corridor on routes to Asia, Interfax reported.

"Of course, this is a very harsh measure, but one that should be mentioned," Medvedev was quoted as saying.

The airspace restrictions come days after EU sanctions nixed aircraft leasing and service agreements between European companies and Russian budget carrier Dobrolyot, forcing the airline out of business. The carrier was blacklisted because of its flights to Crimea,

the annexation of which from Ukraine in March the EU considers illegal.

Medvedev was quoted by Interfax as saying that because of the measures, "Russian citizens had problems that we were forced to solve."

Media reports said earlier this week that Dobrolyot concluded a direct purchase deal for 16 airplanes with U.S. manufacturer Boeing, which is not beholden to European sanctions. The first planes are set to be delivered in 2017.

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