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30% Fewer Russians Choose Europe for Vacations

By The Moscow Times

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The number of Russian tourists going to Europe has decreased by almost a third this year due to the current political tensions between Moscow and the West, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev said Wednesday at a meeting on the legal regulation of outbound tourism.

The total number of Russians vacationing abroad dropped by 4 percent in the first half of this year, while the number going to Europe went down 30 percent during the same period, Medvedev said, according to a manuscript published on the government's website.

Several Russian tour operators went bankrupt this summer, partly due to the reduction in tourist numbers. At least five said they couldn't fulfill their obligations over the last two months, leaving more than 20,000 tourists stranded overseas.

The government had to organize 40 emergency flights to bring the tourists back to Russia, a measure that cost the budget more than 218 million rubles ($5.5 million), according

to materials presented before the meeting.

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