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Cathay Pacific Avoids Flying Over Iran After Missile Warning

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Airlines are more cautious about flying over conflict zones since the downing of a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 last year amid a conflict between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces.

Hong Kong airline Cathay Pacific said Wednesday it has stopped flying over Iran and the Caspian Sea following an air safety agency warning about Russian missiles fired at Syria. The airline's decision to reroute flights comes after Russia stepped up its military campaign against Islamic State group fighters in Syria.

The country started firing cruise missiles from its military warships in the Caspian Sea on Sept. 30. "In view of the situation in the region, Cathay Pacific suspended all flights over Iran and Caspian Sea since last Thursday until further notice," the airline said in a statement.

"We continue to monitor and review the situation on a daily basis." The European Aviation Safety Agency issued a safety bulletin to airlines last week about cruise missiles targeted at Syrian rebels fired by Russian warships in the Caspian Sea.

It said the missiles must cross Iran and Iraq below flight routes used by commercial aircraft. Cathay added that it has had a long-term policy of not overflying Iraq, Afghanistan, Ukraine and Syria.

The agency said it was not making specific recommendations with its bulletin, which was issued to inform airspace users about the potential hazard. Air France said earlier this week it was taking special measures regarding overflying Iran and the Caspian Sea following the agency's warning.

Airlines are more cautious about flying over conflict zones since the downing of a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 last year amid a conflict between Russia-backed separatists and Ukrainian government forces.

Two-thirds of the 298 people who died were Dutch and a Dutch Safety Board report released this week said the jet was destroyed by a Buk surface-to-air missile fired from an area controlled by Russia-backed separatist rebels.

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