

Ukraine Closes Airspace to Russian Planes

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Yatsenyuk said at a televised government meeting: "The Ukrainian government has decided to ban all transit flights for all Russian airlines in Ukraine's airspace," the BBC reported.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk said Wednesday that Russian aircraft would be barred from passing through the country's airspace, expanding an earlier ban on Russian flights to Ukraine.

The measure comes amid a confrontation over power lines from Ukraine to the Russian-controlled Crimean Peninsula that were severed by saboteurs over the weekend. Ukrainian authorities have dawdled over repairs to the cables, which supply around 70 percent of Crimea's electricity. While many Crimeans remain in darkness, Moscow and Kiev have threatened mutual sanctions and trade bans.

Yatsenyuk said at a televised government meeting: "The Ukrainian government has decided to ban all transit flights for all Russian airlines in Ukraine's airspace," the BBC reported.

"The government is instructing [aviation authority] Ukraerorukh, in line with the norms of

international law, to inform the Russian Federation that Russian airlines and Russian aircraft do not have the right to use Ukraine's airspace any longer."

Russian planes have been prohibited from landing in Ukrainian airports since Oct. 25, and many aircraft already avoid Ukraine's airspace, particularly the restive eastern regions over which passenger flight MH17 was shot down last year, killing nearly 300 people.

Russian Deputy Transport Minister Valery Okulov said that air fares could rise if planes were forced to detour around Ukraine, according to news agency RBC.

Russia and Ukraine have been at loggerheads since early 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea following the overthrow by street protesters of a pro-Moscow government in Kiev.

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