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Russian Military Seeks Permission to Shoot Down Passenger Planes

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Igor Ivanko / Moskva News Agency

The Russian Defense Ministry has drafted new rules that would grant the military permission to shoot down hijacked passenger jets.

Current legislation contains conflicting clauses both allowing the military to fire at civilian aircraft hijacked by terrorists and banning shooting down planes that violate the Russian border if passengers are on board.

If the Defense Ministry's rules are approved, the Russian military would be able to shoot down passenger jets that "refuse to obey commands to land," according to the ministry's draft regulations that were submitted for public debate.

"Sadly, people on the plane will die, but this will prevent a more terrible catastrophe," Russia's pro-Kremlin Izvestia daily quoted Senator Frants Klintsevich as saying Friday.

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Klintsevich added that the new regulations are a needed measure practiced in "many other countries."

Russian aircraft on duty will warn the target via either "visual signals" or "warning shots" before engaging it, the draft rules state.

According to the submitted document, an order to take down non-responsive planes will apply if "there is a real risk of people's death or an environmental accident, including the direct threat of an air attack on critical infrastructure."

Hijacked planes are allowed to be attacked if there are no hostages on board, the draft rules say. Intruding warplanes and drones that ignore signals to leave Russian airspace will likewise be shot down.

"The new document should eliminate [legal] contradictions," Izvestia cited military expert Vladislav Shurygin as saying.

The regulations are expected to enter into force next month, according to the draft document.

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