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Russia Orders Mideast Safety Check After Iran Plane Crash, Missile Strikes

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Medvedev has ordered the country's foreign, transport and economy ministers "to assess the safety of flights and tourism in the Middle East, the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in light of recent events there."
Sergei Fadeichev / TASS

Russia's prime minister has ordered an inspection of flight and tourism safety in the Middle East following an Iranian missile strike in Iraq and a fatal plane crash in Tehran, Interfax reported Wednesday.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev's order comes in response to a Ukrainian airliner crashing shortly after takeoff from Tehran, killing all 176 people on board. The instructions also come after Iranian forces fired missiles at military bases housing U.S. troops in Iraq in retaliation for the killing of a top Iranian general.

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Medvedev instructed one of his deputies, as well as the country's foreign, transport and

economy ministers, “to assess the safety of flights and tourism in the Middle East, the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman in light of recent events there.”

Medvedev also called for proposals “to ensure the safety of Russian citizens, taking into account different scenarios in which the situation could develop,” Interfax quoted his spokesman Oleg Osipov as saying. Osipov did not specifically reference either the missile strike or the plane crash.

No Russian citizens were said to be among the 176 victims aboard the Ukraine International Airlines-run Boeing 737-800NG that crashed as it took off en route to Kiev early Wednesday.

Around 40 Russian tourists are currently estimated to be in Iran, Russia’s tour operators association told Interfax.

Russia’s Foreign Ministry said it was working to ensure the safety of its citizens in the region, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Earlier in the day, Russia’s Federal Air Transport Agency, Rosaviatsia, told Russian air carriers to avoid flights in the airspace of Iraq, Iran, the Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

Major airlines canceled Iran and Iraq flights and rerouted others away from both countries' airspace following the Iranian missile strikes.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sent letters of condolences to his Iranian and Ukrainian counterparts following the plane crash.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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