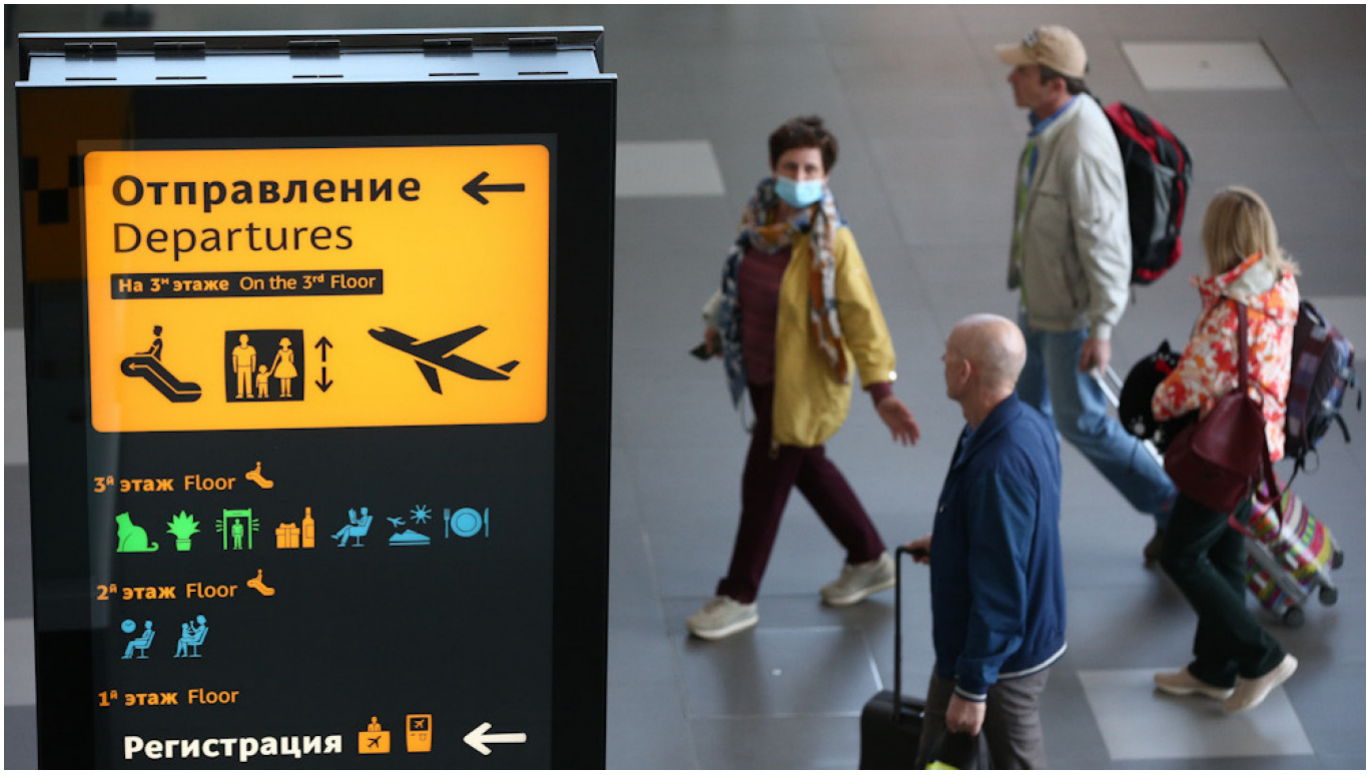
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Kremlin: Russia-EU Flight Disruptions Are 'Technical'

By AFP

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Three Moscow-bound flights operated by EU carriers have been denied permission to land. **Sergei Malgavko / TASS**

The cancellation of several European flights to Moscow after air carriers said they would not fly over Belarus was due to purely technical reasons, the Kremlin said Friday.

"Aviation authorities will give the necessary explanations, but these are technical reasons," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters, adding that the measures were taken to ensure aviation safety.

Belarus sparked a global outcry after it scrambled a fighter jet on Sunday to ground a Ryanair flight from Athens to Vilnius carrying an opposition activist.

In response to the forced landing, the European Union banned flights from Belarusian carrier Belavia and urged airlines based in the bloc to avoid flying over the ex-Soviet country.

Related article: Russia Says EU's Belarus Flight Ban 'Endangers' Passengers

Earlier this week, three Moscow-bound flights operated by European carriers were cancelled after Russia rejected their flight plans.

The most recent cancellation took place on Friday morning, with an Air France flight from Paris saying its flight was scrapped by Russian authorities.

"Of course we would like to avoid such situations but since they have emerged from a decision of the EU... such technical mishaps are unavoidable," Peskov said.

He added that "there are no reasons here for more problems" with Brussels.

In a statement on Friday, Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency said that changes of previously approved routes could result in delays in obtaining arrival, departure or transit permits.

"The increase in time it takes to complete the procedures is due to the increase in the number of requests from airlines," the agency said.

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