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Russian Tourists Fly in to Egypt's Red Sea Resorts After 6-Year Ban

By AFP

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Moscow had barred direct flights to Egypt after the 2015 bombing of a Russian airliner shortly after takeoff from a Red Sea resort. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

A Russian tourist flight from Moscow landed in an Egyptian Red Sea resort Monday for the first time since the October 2015 jihadist bombing of a Russian airliner, a civil aviation official said.

Moscow barred direct flights to Egypt after the bombing of the passenger plane shortly after it took off from the popular Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, killing all 224 people on board.

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Monday's EgyptAir flight from the Russian capital brought 300 tourists to Hurghada, and a second flight is due on Tuesday to bring Russia holidaymakers to the popular resort of Sharm

el-Sheikh.

EgyptAir CEO Amr Abulenein told AFP the national carrier would be operating a total of seven flights a week between Moscow and Hurghada and Sharm el-Sheikh.

A Russian delegation inspected both airports and resort hotels at the end of last month to check on security and health procedures, according to Russia's TASS news agency.

The attack six years ago claimed by the jihadist Islamic State group dealt a blow to Egypt's key tourist industry, and the sector has been further battered by the Covid-19 pandemic.

Egypt reopened to foreign tourists in July last year after having closed its borders in March to stem the flow of coronavirus infections.

In 2019, the last full year before the pandemic struck, tourism made up about 12% of Egypt's GDP.

After a long period of political instability that dented earnings, revenues from the sector recovered to $13 billion that year.

But in 2020, a year when Egypt had initially eyed a further rebound to $16 billion, takings collapsed to $4 billion.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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