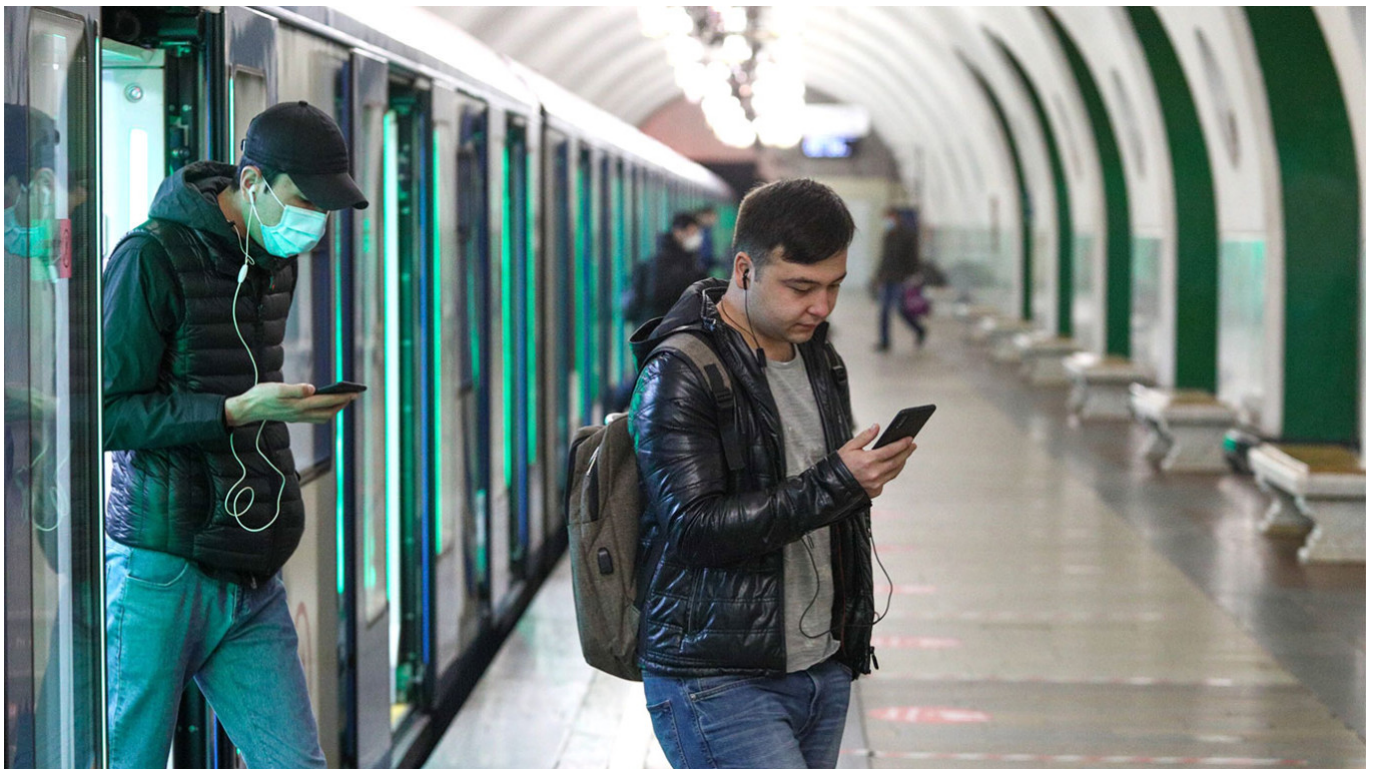


Flights Abroad Sell Out, Stocks Plunge on Putin's 'Partial' Mobilization

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Kirill Zykov / Moskva News Agency

Virtually all flights from Russia to available foreign destinations in the coming days were sold out Wednesday after President Vladimir Putin declared a “partial” mobilization of the country’s 25 million reservists.

Flights from Moscow to the capitals of Georgia, Turkey and Armenia — which do not require visas for Russians — for Sept. 21 were unavailable within minutes of Putin’s announcement, according to Russia’s top travel planning website avia-sales.ru.

Embed:

Just had a look now, and all I can find are tickets to a couple of Central Asian cities – and they're selling out too. <https://t.co/cDbHhCPiGS>
pic.twitter.com/y68YSVwvZW

By noon Moscow time, direct flights from Moscow to Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgyzstan had also stopped showing up on the website.

With rumors of border closures swirling, Russian Railways and flagship airline Aeroflot said they had not “yet” been ordered to ban men aged 18 to 65 from buying tickets.

A Telegram channel that collects Russian travelers’ reports from crossing the border said it has received isolated accounts of guards turning away military-age men.

The airline ticket data coincides with “how to leave Russia” topping Google’s search terms on Tuesday night, when Putin’s speech was initially scheduled before it was postponed to Wednesday morning.

Flights between Russia and the European Union were closed after Putin announced what the Kremlin calls Moscow's "special military operation" in Ukraine.

The onset of fighting sparked concerns among Russians that martial law could be imposed and saw an exodus of tens of thousands of people to countries neighboring Russia.

Putin’s announcement has also sent Russia’s stock market to its lowest levels since he ordered troops to invade Ukraine on Feb. 24.

Related article: [Putin Declares 'Partial' Mobilization Amid Ukraine Setbacks, Warns West of Nuclear Response](#)

The ruble-denominated Moscow Exchange (MOEX) fell by as much as 10%, while stocks of energy giants Rosneft and Gazprom at one point dropped by 12%.

The Russian ruble also fell close to 63 versus the dollar, its weakest in more than two months.

With his forces taking weeks of major battlefield losses in Ukraine amid Kyiv’s counteroffensive, Putin ordered an immediate mobilization of what his defense minister said was 300,000 reservists.

But human rights lawyers noted that Putin’s decree for “partial” mobilization leaves wiggle room to mobilize even more troops than publicly stated.

Activists scheduled nationwide protests on Wednesday evening despite restrictions on anti-war dissent.

AFP contributed reporting.

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