

Azerbaijan Airlines Suspends Flights to Russia Following Deadly Crash

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Dmitry Rogulin / TASS

Azerbaijan Airlines suspended flights between Baku and several Russian cities, local media [reported](#) Friday, two days after one of its planes crashed in western Kazakhstan while en route to the North Caucasus republic of Chechnya.

The airline announced that flights to Sochi, Mineralnye Vody, Volgograd, Ufa and Samara will be halted starting Saturday “for safety reasons” until the investigation into Wednesday’s crash of Flight 8432 is complete. Later, it [said](#) flights to the cities of Nizhny Novgorod, Vladikavkaz and Saratov would also be suspended.

Preliminary findings [reported](#) by Azerbaijani and Western media, citing unnamed government sources in Baku, suggest the passenger plane was shot down by a Russian surface-to-air missile. The Kremlin has [declined](#) to comment on the allegations, stating it will await the investigation’s outcome.

Azerbaijan Airlines said later on Friday that it could confirm the preliminary results of the investigation pointed to “physical and technical external interference,” possibly a reference to GPS jamming Flight 8432 reportedly faced while approaching Grozny.

Related article: [Kremlin Refuses to Comment on Azerbaijani Plane Crash Until Investigation Complete](#)

Russian authorities have provided various explanations for the crash, which happened near Aktau, Kazakhstan, and killed 38 people. Initially, officials blamed a bird strike, but some aviation experts dismissed this explanation, citing video footage that appeared to show the plane experiencing hydraulic issues before it crashed.

On Friday, Russia’s civil aviation authority Rosaviatsia appeared to attribute the plane’s rerouting away from Chechnya to thick fog, as well as Ukrainian drone activity that disrupted airspace over the North Caucasus earlier that day.

“The situation around Grozny airport at the time was very difficult, with Ukrainian combat drones attacking civilian infrastructure in Grozny and Vladikavkaz,” Rosaviatsia head Dmitry Yarov [said](#) in a video statement published by state news agency TASS.

He added that a “carpet regime” was implemented Wednesday morning, requiring all aircraft to leave Kadyrov Grozny International Airport airspace. Earlier, Azerbaijani media reported that Russian ground control did not close airspace to civilian aircraft.

Meanwhile, as the investigation into the crash continues, Azerbaijani lawmakers are demanding accountability from Russia.

“They have to accept this, punish those to blame, promise that such a thing will not happen again, express regrets and readiness to pay compensation,” Azerbaijani MP Rasim Musabekov told AFP. “We are waiting for Russia to do this.”

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