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Rosaviatsia Expands Middle East Flight Restrictions

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Sergei Bulkin / TASS

Russian civil aviation authorities announced late Monday additional restrictions on civilian flights in the Middle East after Iran fired a retaliatory rocket attack on a U.S. military base in Qatar.

Rosaviatsia issued a directive to Russian commercial airlines and other aircraft operators that reiterated an existing ban on flights to and from airports in Israel and Iran. It also expanded airspace restrictions to include Qatar, while Russian aircraft had already been prohibited from entering airspace over Israel, Jordan, Iraq and Iran.

The restrictions, which Rosaviatsia said it issued "in response to the escalating situation in the Middle East," are set to be in place until at least 3 a.m. Moscow time on Thursday.

"The decision was made as a precautionary measure to ensure flight safety, which remains a top priority," the agency said in a statement.

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Russia's Association of Tour Operators said Tuesday that some flights from Kuwait and Oman to Russia were canceled. Flights from Bahrain, Dubai and Abu Dhabi were delayed by up to three hours due to rerouted paths.

Global carriers have reduced or suspended operations in the region after the United States struck three Iranian nuclear sites on Sunday, prompting Iran to retaliate by launching missiles at the U.S. Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. No casualties were reported.

Qatar, Kuwait and Bahrain closed their airspace Monday in response to the Iranian missile barrage.

Russia's Foreign Ministry on Tuesday urged its citizens in Qatar, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates and Oman to exercise "maximum caution" and avoid public spaces such as shopping malls and transportation hubs.

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