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Weekend Drone Attacks Disrupt Over 1K Flights at Moscow Airports

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Vasily Kuzmichenok / Moskva News Agency

Ukrainian drone attacks triggered another wave of flight disruptions at Moscow's airports over the weekend, with more than 1,000 flights delayed or canceled, according to Russian media reports.

Sheremetyevo, Vnukovo, Domodedovo and Zhukovsky airports faced extensive operational shutdowns as Russian air defenses intercepted dozens of drones approaching the capital between July 19 and 21.

Russia's Defense Ministry said 18 drones were shot down on July 19, 26 on July 20 and 23 more on July 21.

Flight operations were repeatedly suspended due to airspace closures, with Sheremetyevo canceling over 170 flights and delaying hundreds more on Monday alone, the RBC news website reported. Vnukovo and Domodedovo also saw significant disruptions.

This marks the fourth such disruption to Moscow's air traffic since the beginning of May, the start of the tourist high season.

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Industry figures show cumulative airport closures over the past three months exceeded 24 hours at each of the city's major airports, with Domodedovo facing over 60 hours of downtime.

Airlines have canceled around 1,000 flights since early May, with 430 planes diverted to alternate airports. At least 200,000 passengers, or roughly one in 10 air travelers, have been affected, the Association of Tour Operators of Russia (ATOR) calculated.

Despite mounting losses, state aviation authority Rosaviatsia said it has no plans to compensate airlines for delays or cancellations.

Responding to the latest disruptions, Russia's new Transportation Minister Andrei Nikitin said the situation at Moscow's airports was "slightly better" than in May.

"Neither airports nor airlines can predict when the 'Carpet Plan' [emergency airspace closure] will be triggered," he said. "Of course, we will work with the Defense Ministry to find a solution, but safety remains the top priority."

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