RUSSIA'S EGYPT FLIGHT BAN WILL LAST 'MONTHS'

News / Airlines

Russia's ban on flights to Egypt will last at least **several months**, President Vladimir Putin's chief of staff has said.

Sergei Ivanov was quoted in Russian media as saying it would be impossible to dramatically change the policy in a short time.

He said the restrictions would last "for several months, as a minimum," according to the RIA Novosti news agency.

Russia suspended all flights to the country on Friday after strong indications a bomb was to blame for the Metrojet crash in the Sinai Peninsula.

Egypt needs to tighten security at all its airports, Mr Ivanov said, including the capital Cairo and the Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

Checks at Sharm el Sheikh airport have been heavily criticised.

Some passengers said they were able to pay guards to bypass screening, while others claimed

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security workers were asleep or playing games on their phones.

With the spotlight on Egypt, the boss of Cairo airport said officials from Russia, Holland, Italy, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar were already examining security.

The Russian Metrojet plane came down shortly after taking off from Sharm on its way to St Petersburg on 31 October.

All 224 people on the flight died.

America and British intelligence points towards terrorism and a member of the investigation team has said they are 90% sure the noise heard on the black box seconds before it crashed was a bomb**.**

A group affiliated to Islamic State has claimed responsibility but has not provided evidence to confirm it was behind the attack.

The halt on flights is a major blow to Egypt's holiday industry as almost a third of tourists in 2014 were from Russia.

Meanwhile, 2,301 more people returned to the UK from Sharm el Sheikh on Monday.

Thousands of Britons are still standed but should all be home by the end of the weekend, according to Foreign Secretary Phillip Hammond.

Passengers' luggage is being flown separately, with only allowed hand baggage allowed on board.

The Foreign Office is temporarily warning against "all but essential travel by air to or from Sharm".

EasyJet, Monarch, Thomson Airways and Thomas Cook have extended the period for cancelled outbound flights up to and including 25 November.

British Airways said it would not operate flights up to 23 November.

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