UKRAINE TURNS DOWN RUSSIA'S CALL TO RESUME TALKS ON FLIGHTS

News / Airlines

Russian aviation agency Rosaviatsia said on Thursday it had proposed to Ukraine's aviation authorities further talks on resuming flights between the two countries, but Kiev swiftly turned down the offer.

Direct air services between the one-time allies ceased on Sunday, a new low in commercial relations between the two neighbours who are in a bitter standoff since Russia annexed Ukraine's Crimea peninsula in 2014 following a pro-Europe street uprising in Kiev.

Kiev banned incoming flights by Russian airlines, including flagship carrier Aeroflot, from Oct. 25 to punish them for flying to Crimea. Moscow criticised the move as an "another act of madness" and responded by closing Russian airspace to Ukrainian airlines.

Rosaviatsia said in a statement on Thursday that it had proposed "continuing the dialogue with the aim of quickly resuming air links between Russian and Ukraine". The termination of flights, it said,

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was pushing up costs for passengers.

A spokesman for Ukraine's infrastructure ministry confirmed the Ukraine had received a letter from Rosaviatsia, but said negotiations could only start "if Russia pays existing fines and stops flying to restricted areas, principally Crimea." The fines were imposed on Russia for violations of airspace over Crimea.

The loss of ticket sales - around 657,000 passengers flew between Ukraine and Russia in the first half of 2015 - will hit the bottom-line of both countries' airlines, some of which have already posted losses for parts of this year.

Earlier this week people familiar with the matter said flights were unlikely to resume soon.

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