ARBIL CLOSURE CANCELS EMIRATES, QATAR AIRWAYS FLIGHTS

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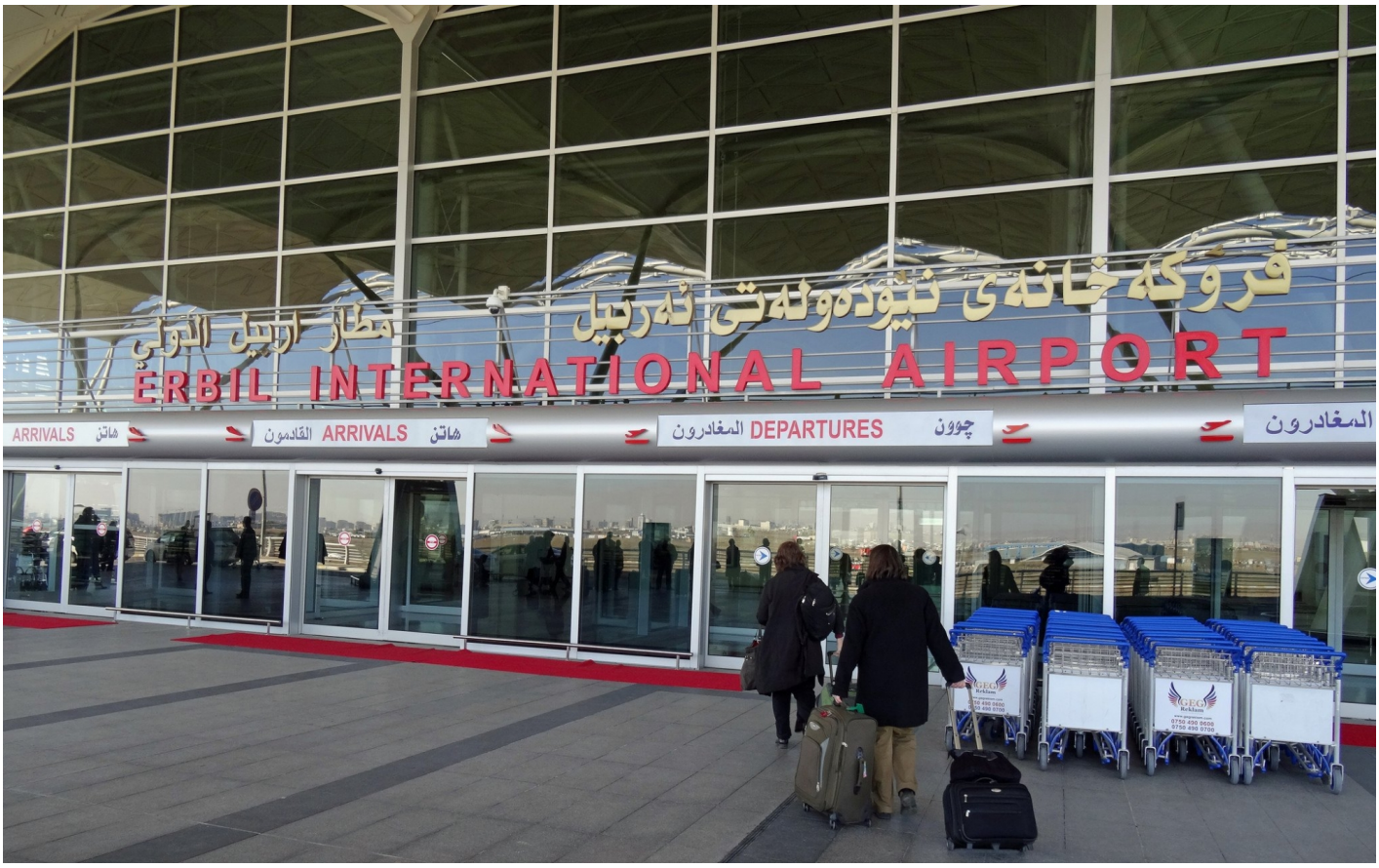

Arbil airport closure due to Russian military airstrikes in neighbouring Syria prompts move.

Emirates and Qatar Airways are cancelling flights to Arbil in Iraqi Kurdistan this week after Iraq’s Civil Aviation Authority (ICAA) closed the region's airports due to a military campaign in neighbouring Syria.

The ICAA said late on Sunday it was suspending flights to Arbil and Sulaimaniyah on Monday and Tuesday this week to “protect travelers” as Russian airstrikes from the Caspian Sea to Syria pass through northern Iraqi airspace.

Emirates said on its website on Monday it has suspended flights to Arbil from Monday, November 23 until Thursday, November 26 due to the closure of the airport. Flights to the Iraqi capital Baghdad and to Basra are operating to schedule, it said.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson from Qatar Airways told Gulf News by email that the airline cancelled its daily flight to Arbil on Sunday, November 22 and on Monday, November 23. The spokesperson did not comment on Tuesday's services but said the airline was monitoring the situation.

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A flydubai spokesperson also told Gulf News they had cancelled Monday's and Tuesday's flights to Arbil following the airport closure.

Russia launched air strikes in Syria on September 20 in support of President Bashar Al Assad. In October, it fired cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea, nearly 1,5000 kilometres over Iran and Iraq.

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