

# RUSSIAN AIRLINES TO FLY NON-STOP TO NORTHERN CYPRUS?



From November 15, 2022, allegedly there are to be non-stop flights between Russia and Ercan in Northern Cyprus. On board the first flight should be none other than Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, Turkish media report. Russia however denied it.

The "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus" is the so-called regime that was established in the aftermath of Turkey's military invasion of Cyprus in 1974. **It declared independence on November 15, 1983, but this is still not recognized internationally.** The division of the Mediterranean island has also resulted in some difficulties for aviation. For example, Nicosia Airport has been located in an UN-protected zone since 1974 and has since fallen into disrepair because it can no longer be used.

In the southern part of the island, Larnaka and Paphos airports established themselves as the successor airports, while in the north Ercan is available for flying. At least in theory, because in practice the latter airport is almost exclusively served from Turkey. There is a reason for this, because governments that do not recognize Northern Cyprus prohibit their airlines from flying to this airport.

In the past, this has repeatedly led to curious constructions. For example, Turkish airlines offering flights to Ercan from the EU carry out touch-and-go maneuvers at airports in Turkey and then fly on to Northern Cyprus. This is done to circumvent the ban, and the "connecting flight" is considered a domestic flight by Turkey anyway.

The fact that the first commercial nonstop flight between Russia and Northern Cyprus may be operated on November 15, 2022, of all days, is no coincidence. Turkey and the government of Northern Cyprus want to celebrate the 39th anniversary of the internationally unrecognized declaration of independence on that day. On this occasion, Erdogan is also expected to officially open the new terminal and the renovated runway in Ercan.

## Russia Has Not Recognized Northern Cyprus

The project and Russia, Turkey and Northern Cyprus is considered to be massively controversial internationally. In fact, the Russian embassy in Nicosia officially denied the information on direct flights from Russia circulated in the Cypriot media.

It is also noteworthy that the Russian Federation co-sponsored Resolution 541/1983 in the United Nations Security Council. Formally, the Soviet Union voted at the time as a permanent member of the body, but the Russian Federation quite officially became the legal successor - with all rights and obligations - of the USSR and therefore also took over the permanent seat on the UN Security Council.

The resolution states that the declaration of independence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus is illegal and calls on all member states of the United Nations not to recognize it. This document is also the basis for the fact that most governments in the world strictly prohibit their airlines from flying to Northern Cyprus. It goes without saying that Turkey, which played a major role in the division of the island, recognizes Northern Cyprus, but not the UN resolution.

So far, the Russian Federation has not officially recognized the independence of Northern Cyprus. Therefore, there is speculation, at least not unfounded, in Russia, Turkey and Cyprus that this step is likely to be taken by November 15, 2022 at the latest. Even if this is not done, the launch of nonstop flights between Russia and northern Cyprus could have consequences in terms of aviation law.

For example, the European Union and/or governments of unknown states could prohibit Russian airlines that have Ercan in their route network from using the airspace. In relation to the EU, however, this would have symbolic significance at best, since the Russian Federation is barred anyway due to the sanctions practised against it in the wake of the Russian army's invasion of Ukraine. However, it is completely unclear whether the EU Commission could additionally sanction Turkish carriers. However, the latter is considered unlikely.

### **Russian Tourists Expected to Generate Strong Sales in Northern Cyprus**

The purpose behind the launch of non-stop flights between Russia and Ercan would be clear. Turkey has been trying to bring Russian tourists into the country on a large scale for some time. Due to the sanctions imposed by many countries, it is not so easy for airlines to fly reasonably economical routes. Many countries are not allowed to fly to at all. Turkey does not participate in the sanctions and tries to get as much of the "cake" as possible. Since Northern Cyprus - in contrast to the southern part of the island - has very little tourist demand, they want to fly in as many vacationers as possible from Russia. **Without the financial and material support of Turkey, Northern Cyprus would have long since been economically finished.**

It is still unclear which Russian airlines may include Ercan in their route network. The "permits" are to be issued unbureaucratically and at short notice. Turkish tour operators or their Russian subsidiaries are to launch low-priced package tour offers as quickly as possible. In the next few days, Russia, Turkey and Northern Cyprus may announce the first flight schedules.

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