

NEWLY APPROVED CHINESE AIRLINE TO THE U.S. AVOID RUSSIAN AIRSPACE



According to flight-tracking website FlightAware and industry officials, Chinese airlines refrain from flying over Russian airspace on newly approved flight routes to and from the U.S.

Russia has banned U.S. airlines and other foreign carriers from flying over its airspace in retaliation for Washington's March 2022 ban on Russian flights over the U.S. following the start of the war in Ukraine.

FlightAware records show that Chinese flights recently approved by Washington are not flying over Russia, while U.S. flights by previously approved Chinese airlines still use Russian airspace.

The U.S. Department of Transportation (USDOT) announced on May 3 that **Chinese airlines would now be permitted to increase their passenger service to the U.S. to 12 round-trip flights per week**, which matches the number of flights that Beijing had previously approved for U.S. carriers. This increases the previous limitation of eight weekly flights for Chinese carriers.

During a press conference, Annie Petsonk, the USDOT assistant secretary for aviation and international affairs, chose not to respond to a query regarding whether the Biden administration had made it mandatory for Chinese airlines to avoid Russian airspace as a prerequisite for approving the four new flights. Instead, Petsonk emphasized that the gradual increase in China-U.S. flights to 12 per week demonstrates a cautious approach, which is expected to continue.

It is worth noting that the 12 weekly flights are just a tiny fraction of the 150 round-trip flights permitted by both sides before the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.

On May 18, the USDOT approved a new weekly Air China flight between Beijing and New York, a new weekly China Eastern flight between Shanghai and Los Angeles, a third weekly Xiamen Airlines flight between Xiamen and Los Angeles, and a second weekly China Southern flight between Guangzhou and Los Angeles. Xiamen and China Southern flights began on May 30.

To remind everyone, in February, **two United States senators asked the Biden administration to prohibit Chinese airlines from flying over Russian airspace when operating on U.S. routes.** This is because it gives Chinese airlines an advantage in fuel consumption and flight time. American Airlines (A.A.), a prominent U.S. airline, supported the senators' proposal and emphasized the aviation industry's longstanding concerns regarding flying over Russia.

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