

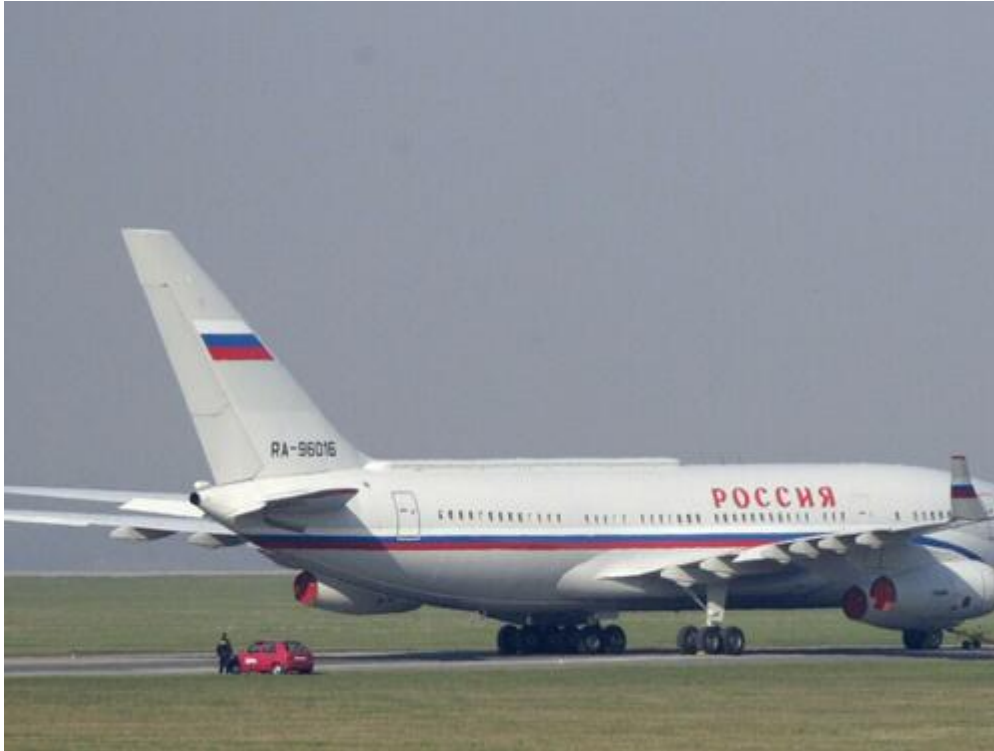


NATO Countries Surrounding Serbia Blocked Russian FM's Plane In "Hostile Action"

Description

RUSSIA: The Kremlin has denounced fresh airspace closures by three eastern European countries which blocked a top level Russian diplomatic flight as a **"hostile action"** in Monday statements.

Russian Foreign Ministry Sergey Lavrov was set to fly Sunday for an official trip to Serbia, but his **plane was blocked by the countries surrounding Serbia, which includes Bulgaria, North Macedonia and Montenegro**. All three countries, including the tiny Serb breakaway nation of Montenegro, are NATO members.



IL-96 plane of the Russian presidential administration's airline. Via Reuters

Lavrov in follow-up called the move “unprecedented” and “unthinkable” – with a separate statement from Putin’s office saying such actions thwart essential diplomatic communications and contacts.

“There were a lot of questions from the media last night and this morning regarding our reaction to the unprecedented decisions taken by some NATO member states and the decisions that prevented the Russian Foreign Minister from visiting the Republic of Serbia. **The unthinkable has happened**, of course; I understand the interest you are showing in our assessment of these outrageous actions,” Lavrov stated.

“What has happened is basically **a deprivation of a sovereign state’s right to conduct foreign policy. Serbia’s international activity is blocked**, at least for the moment in the direction of Russia,” the top Russian diplomat emphasized.

He added: “We are not going to beat around the bush here. This is another very clear and instructive demonstration of the extent to which NATO and the EU can go to use the most lowbrow ways to influence those who are guided by national interests and not ready to sacrifice their principles, their dignity in favor of the very rules that the West imposes instead of international law,” according to TASS.

And separately a statement from Dmitry Peskov said “such actions could cause problems with the timing of high-level diplomatic meetings. But they would not prevent Moscow from maintaining contacts with friendly countries.”

Additionally, foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova slammed the move as “another closed

channel of communication” – in reference to ongoing tit-for-tat expulsions of diplomats between Russia and the EU particularly.



But perhaps the most interesting comments came from Serbia. It should be recalled that during NATO’s 1999 bombing campaign of Yugoslavia under then US President Bill Clinton, Russia was Belgrade’s foremost ally in condemning the US-Western action. In response to Lavrov’s plane being blocked, Serbia’s interior minister, Aleksandar Vulin, called it an “obstruction” of “a great and proven friend of Serbia.”

“A world in which diplomats cannot seek peace is a world in which there is no peace. Those who prevented the arrival of Sergei Lavrov **do not want peace, they dream of defeating Russia**,” Vulin [said](#). He added: “Serbia is proud that it is not part of the anti-Russian hysteria, and the countries that are, will have time to be ashamed.”

The Kremlin later confirmed the trip has been canceled after the overnight airspace blockage. Within the first week of the Feb.24 Russian invasion of Ukraine, a number of European countries moved to preemptively close airspace to all Russian flights, including commercial traffic.

by Tyler Durden

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