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変化するユーラシア航空回廊の現実

ロシア・ウクライナ戦争と中東情勢がもたらす国際民間航空への影響

The Changing Eurasian Air Corridors

Impact of the Russia-Ukraine War and Middle East Tensions on International Civil Aviation



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Research Report

Structural Change in Russian Airspace, Aviation Infrastructure, and Civil Aviation Risk

President Zelensky's Warning That "Russia's Skies Are Dangerous," and the Eurasian Air Corridor Amid Concurrent Middle East Tensions

Prepared by: Aviation Intelligence Lab

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Period Covered: February 24, 2022 – September 14, 2026

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This report is an independent analysis by Aviation Intelligence Lab based on open-source intelligence (OSINT); it does not rely on non-public information from governments, militaries, or airlines. The military situation remains fluid, and the content reflects publicly available information as of the reference date. Throughout, the report clearly distinguishes confirmed facts, official/agency assessments, the report's own analysis, and forward-looking scenarios.

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1. Purpose of This Report

On September 1, 2026, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky warned airlines, aviation insurers, and anyone still using Russia's major airports that Russian airspace "will effectively be closing." This statement is often reported in the simplified form that "Ukraine closed Russian airspace," but that framing is inaccurate both legally and operationally.

The purpose of this report is to take that statement as a starting point and analyze the broader structure it points to: the Russia-Ukraine war, Russian air-defense activity, GNSS (satellite positioning) jamming, airport closures, the risk of misidentification or accidental shoot-down, risk assessment by airlines and insurers, avoidance of Russian airspace, diversion toward Central Asia and the Middle East, rising conflict risk in the Middle East, the overall shrinking of Eurasian air corridors, and the resulting impact on operating costs, fares, and cargo.

The central question of this report is not a binary "is Russian airspace dangerous or not." Rather, it focuses on how the air corridors that can simultaneously satisfy safety, diplomatic conditions, and economics between East Asia and Europe are changing as the Russia-Ukraine war and Middle East tensions unfold at the same time.

2. Scope and Reference Date

- Reference date: September 14, 2026 (Japan Standard Time)
- Period covered: February 24, 2022 (start of Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine) – September 14, 2026
- Primary research base: Deep Research baseline material commissioned by the Lab (reference date September 3, 2026; period covered February 24, 2022 – September 3, 2026)
- Additional research: the Middle East (Iran, Iraq, Yemen/the Houthis, the Red Sea, the Persian Gulf) was not covered in the baseline material, so the Lab independently verified primary and near-primary sources from EASA, the FAA, Reuters, AP, Al Jazeera, and others as of September 14, 2026

- Out of scope: the first-half 2026 financial results and earnings of China's three major airlines are outside the scope of this report

3. Executive Summary

[Confirmed Fact] President Zelensky's statement is not a declaration that legally closes Russian airspace. According to a statement from the Office of the President of Ukraine, Ukraine does not intend to target civil aviation itself; rather, it warns that as long as Russia continues the war, Ukraine will continue drone (UAS) strikes on military-related targets, and that as a result Russian skies are becoming an unsafe space for civil aviation. [1]

[Confirmed Fact] On September 2, ICAO issued a general statement — not limited to Russia — warning that long-range weapons, UAS, GNSS radio-frequency interference, and advanced air-defense systems threaten civil aviation, and called on member states to improve airspace risk assessment and civil-military coordination. EASA, for its part, maintains a strict assessment recommending avoidance at all altitudes for Russian airspace west of 60° E. [2][3]

[Report Analysis] This report brings fresh focus to a question not addressed elsewhere: if airlines avoid Russia, where can East Asia–Europe flights actually fly? Entering 2026, the Middle East has also seen concurrent military conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States (from February 28, 2026) and a resurgence of the Yemeni civil war, with the Houthis seizing key Red Sea islands (from July 2026, around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait). EASA and the FAA continue to recommend avoidance at all altitudes for the airspace of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. Consequently, the Central Asian and Middle Eastern routes envisioned as alternatives to Russia also carry their own, independent security constraints. Neither Russia nor the Middle East can simply be labeled "dangerous" or "safe" as a whole; risk must be assessed at a finer level — by FIR (flight information region), longitude band, altitude, and time period. [18][19][7]

4. Confirmed Facts

4-1 Zelensky's Statement and the ICAO/Russian Response

[Confirmed Fact] Immediately after its full-scale invasion began on February 24, 2022, Ukraine closed its entire airspace via NOTAM (Notice to Airmen). Russia, by contrast, never fully closed its own airspace and has continued to accept civil aviation operations, at least in general airspace.

[Report Analysis] This asymmetry — the side under attack closing its airspace immediately and completely, while the attacking side keeps its own airspace open — can plausibly be explained by several rational motives: Russia's low initial assessment of the risk of direct attack on its own territory at the start of the war, and the fact that accepting domestic and international flights underpins its own economy, logistics, and domestic mobility, such that a full closure would deal a major blow to its economy. That said, no primary source in which the Russian government has officially explained this reasoning has been identified as of this report's reference date. This should be read as a coherent analytical hypothesis about motive, not a confirmed fact.

[Confirmed Fact] On September 1, President Zelensky named not only airlines but also "insurers" and "anyone still using Russia's major airports." This report assesses that naming insurers specifically signals an intent not toward legal airspace closure, but toward de facto closure achieved through a reassessment of risk. [1]

[Confirmed Fact] Ukraine's infrastructure minister sent a letter to the President of the ICAO Council urging member states to support a full ban on civil aircraft operations in Russian airspace. ICAO itself has no authority to directly order this on its 193 member states. [4]

[Report Analysis] Sending this letter is itself an exercise of the procedural right Ukraine holds as a party to the Chicago Convention to raise safety concerns with the ICAO Council, and constitutes a legitimate diplomatic act under international law. However, exercising this right to raise concerns is a separate matter from legally closing Russian airspace. While the ICAO Council may deliberate on and voice such concerns, ICAO has no authority to legally extinguish any individual member state's sovereignty over its own airspace.

[Official/Agency Assessment] Rosaviatsiya (Russia's federal air transport agency) pushed back on

Ukraine's appeal, calling it "legally ineffective" and "in violation of the Chicago Convention." Russia's Ministry of Transport announced on September 3 that it had explained its safety procedures in response to inquiries from foreign airlines. [6]

[Report Analysis] However, the authorities' description of "normal operations" is not equivalent to the actual level of aviation safety risk. On September 2 alone, Sheremetyevo Airport reportedly saw 21 flight cancellations and 235 delays, and Vnukovo Airport 22 cancellations and 94 delays, with carriers including Pegasus and flydubai individually notifying passengers of possible cancellations, delays, or diversions. [5]

4-2 2022–2026: The Changing State of Russian Aviation Infrastructure

- 2022: Long-term operational restrictions begin at multiple airports in southern Russia
- 2023: Drone incursions near Moscow begin to become routine
- 2024: A large-scale attack on Moscow (November 10) temporarily closes several airports; the Azerbaijan Airlines Flight J2-8243 accident (December 25)
- 2025: Mass cancellations and delays at Sheremetyevo and other airports (July); operational restrictions at North Caucasus airports (December)
- 2026: Repeated temporary closures continue at Moscow's major airports (February, June); according to AP's tally, Russia reported intercepting more than 43,300 drones in summer 2026 (June–August) — roughly six times the figure for the same period a year earlier (note: this figure is based on Russian official announcements and has not been independently verified) [16]

In every one of these years, the impact goes beyond outright "airport closure" and must be understood as an impact on the aviation network as a whole — hours-long restrictions on takeoffs and landings, cancellations, delays, holding patterns, diversions, disrupted aircraft rotations, effects on crew duty time, and knock-on effects on subsequent flights (see Figure 1 for the timeline).

4-3 Azerbaijan Airlines Flight J2-8243

[Confirmed Fact] On December 25, 2024, an Embraer E190 (registration 4K-AZ65) flying from Baku

to Grozny experienced an in-flight anomaly near Grozny, crossed the Caspian Sea, and crashed near Aktau, Kazakhstan. 38 of the 67 people on board were killed. [8]

[Fact Confirmed by the Official Accident Investigation] The preliminary report documented numerous puncture-type damage to the aft fuselage and vertical stabilizer and damage to the hydraulic system, and identified damage from "external objects" as a subject of the investigation. [8]

[Unresolved] As of this report's reference date, no report has been identified that definitively establishes the nature of the external object, the type of weapon involved, or who was responsible.

[Parties' Claims] Azerbaijan's president stated his view that the aircraft was struck by errant ground fire from within Russian territory. Russia initially suggested possibilities such as a bird strike immediately after the accident, but in October 2025, President Putin told President Aliyev in a meeting that two Russian air-defense missiles had detonated near the aircraft while Russia was responding to a Ukrainian drone. [9]

EASA's 2026 CZIB cites this incident as a key real-world example of risk in Russian airspace. The point this report draws from the case is not that "a Ukrainian drone shot down a civil aircraft," but that it demonstrates that a compound chain of danger can actually materialize: a UAS threat → an electronic-warfare/GNSS-jamming environment → activation of air-defense systems → continued civil aircraft operations within the affected airspace → risk of misidentification or debris damage. [3]

4-4 GNSS Jamming

Since February 2022, EASA has observed a marked increase in GNSS jamming/spoofing around the Baltic Sea, the Black Sea, the Eastern Mediterranean, the Middle East, and the Arctic. In October 2025, the ICAO Assembly backed the Council's finding that repeated GNSS radio-frequency interference originating from the Russian Federation and North Korea violates obligations under the Chicago Convention. [10]

As concrete examples of real harm, Finnair was unable to land a flight to Tartu, Estonia in April 2024 due to GPS jamming and suspended the route for about a month. In January 2025, a Ryanair flight from

London Luton to Vilnius diverted to Warsaw because of GPS jamming. [11][12]

[Important Caveat] The erratic flight-track displays observed on ADS-B-based services such as Flightradar24 are, at best, a supplementary OSINT indicator for considering the possibility of GNSS jamming; other factors, such as gaps in receiver coverage or MLAT (multilateration) positioning error, can also produce them. A "jagged flight track" cannot simply be equated with "GNSS jamming."

5. Data Analysis

5-1 Airlines Using Russian Airspace (as far as can be confirmed, as of September 2026)

Insofar as it can be confirmed from public ADS-B and route data, a distinction must be drawn between carriers that fly into Russian domestic airports and those that merely overfly Russian territory between two other countries without landing. This distinction is particularly easy to conflate in the case of Chinese carriers, and requires care. [13]

Category	Main Airlines (partial, confirmed)
Direct flights into Russia (e.g., to Moscow)	Uzbekistan Airways, Belavia, Air Serbia, and others. Some Chinese carriers also operate direct flights (e.g., Beijing–Moscow), but as discussed below, this is not their primary use of Russian airspace
Third-country overflight (no landing in Russia)	Chinese carriers such as Air China, China Eastern, China Southern, Hainan Airlines, and XiamenAir (the large majority of China–Europe flights), plus Emirates, Etihad Airways, Qatar Airways, flydubai, Turkish Airlines, Pegasus, and others

[Confirmed Fact] Chinese carriers' use of Russian airspace is centered not on direct flights from Chinese domestic airports into Russia, but primarily on third-country routes between China and Europe that transit Russian airspace without landing. Air China, China Eastern, China Southern, Hainan Airlines, and XiamenAir, among others, overfly Russia on the large majority of their China–Europe flights; according to figures compiled by OAG (the UK aviation data company), Chinese carriers now account for roughly 80% of China–Europe seat capacity (excluding flights to Russia itself) in the 2026

summer schedule. This advantage stems from the fact that flying over Russia shortens flight time and fuel burn, giving these carriers an edge in both fares and seat supply over Western carriers that are forced to take longer, roundabout routes. [26][27][28]

This represents the minimum verified set that can be confirmed from public flight-operations data, and is not a complete official list that would include smaller Central Asian and Caucasus operators, charters, and seasonal services.

5-2 Distinguishing Japan-Departure Flights from the Use of Russian Airspace

[Confirmed Fact] In the 2026 actual flight-path samples referenced in this report, the following Japan-departure/arrival flights did not transit Russian airspace.

Flight	Route (airspace confirmed)
Air India Haneda–Delhi (AI357)	Japan – open ocean – China – Bangladesh – India
Turkish Airlines Haneda–Istanbul (TK199)	Japan – near South Korea – China – Kazakhstan – the Caucasus – Turkey
Qatar Airways Narita–Doha (QR807/809)	Japan – near South Korea – China – Pakistan – Iran – toward the Gulf

Turkish Airlines is itself a "Russia-using carrier" that operates direct flights to Moscow, St. Petersburg, Kazan, and other Russian cities, but its Tokyo–Istanbul flight itself does not use Russian airspace. "That airline uses Russian airspace" and "that airline's Japan flights use Russian airspace" are clearly distinct propositions, and conflating the two is, in this report's assessment, one of the most important errors to avoid. The same applies to Japan–Beijing, Shanghai, Dalian, and other China routes: a Chinese carrier using Russia on its Europe routes is a separate matter from whether the Japan–China route itself requires Russian airspace.

5-3 JAL and ANA's Avoidance of Russia and Flight Times

Before the invasion, JAL's and ANA's European flights normally transited Siberian airspace, with the two carriers together operating roughly 60 weekly flights via Russian airspace, mainly between Tokyo and London, Paris, Frankfurt, Helsinki, and other cities. From March 2022, JAL switched to a northern

routing via Alaska and the Arctic, and ANA to a southern routing via Central Asia. Since then, carriers have not stuck to a fixed northern or southern routing, but instead choose between them depending on winds, ETOPS/EDTO requirements, payload, and route charges, among other factors. [15]

Flightradar24's analysis has found cases in which JAL/Finnair Tokyo–Helsinki flights, after avoiding Russia, fly roughly 4,000 km farther than the great-circle route, with flight times that were about 9.5 hours before the invasion reaching as long as 13 hours after Russia avoidance began. Longer flight times carry a structural ripple effect: the fuel-to-carry-fuel penalty of carrying the extra fuel itself, pressure on crew duty time, the number of daily rotations an aircraft can fly, cargo payload, and maintenance scheduling. [14]

6. Aviation Safety Assessment

The primary issue here is not "whether Ukraine intentionally attacks civil aircraft," but a broader structural accident chain: a UAS incursion → Russian air-defense alert → activation of air-defense systems → electronic warfare/GNSS jamming → simultaneous tracking of multiple targets → compressed decision time → civil-military coordination → misidentification or unintended harm. This chain can realize itself as a structural risk wherever an actively operating air-defense system and civil aviation occupy the same airspace (see Figure 3 for an outline of this chain).

[Report Analysis] The foundation of this structural risk is the fact noted in 4-1: that Russia has never fully closed its own airspace and has continued to accept civil aviation operations. Even if the initial decision was grounded in economic rationality, as the war drags on and UAS incursions and active air-defense operations become routine, continuing civilian flight operations means that a "wartime-footing air-defense environment" and "civil aviation operating as if in peacetime" accumulate more and more time coexisting in the same airspace. The analytical position of this report is that a misidentification accident like AZAL 8243 is one structural outcome that can emerge from this accumulation, not something attributable solely to the misjudgment of an individual air-defense unit.

In a prolonged war, human factors — personnel fatigue, unit rotation, differences in experience,

command and control, communications, psychological strain — can become latent risk factors. However, attributing this to the training level of a specific unit, or to ethnicity or political system, as "the reason civil aircraft cannot be identified," is an unfounded generalization that should be avoided. The focus belongs on the structure of the system and environment, not on individual soldiers.

What AZAL 8243 shares with past cases such as MH17 (2014) and PS752 (2020) is this: "having no intent to attack a civil aircraft" and "a civil aircraft being safe" are not the same thing. ICAO's repeated calls, in its September 2026 statement, for improved civil-military coordination reflect an awareness of this underlying structural problem. [2]

7. Flight Operations Assessment

The shrinking of safe airspace ripples through the cost structure of flight operations via the following chain (see Figure 6): longer flight distance → longer flight time → more fuel carried (and the added weight burden of that extra fuel itself) → tighter crew duty time and the need for relief crews → lower daily aircraft utilization → greater maintenance burden (time-controlled components and engines reaching their maintenance thresholds sooner) → restricted cargo/revenue payload → reduced schedule reliability.

Regarding maintenance, rather than the oversimplified claim that "maintenance costs necessarily rise," the more accurate statement is that "longer flight time can bring forward the maintenance thresholds for time-controlled parts and engines, which can increase the maintenance burden per aircraft."

It is also important that a planned route cannot always be flown exactly as planned. Bad weather, NOTAMs, military activity, sudden airspace closures, GNSS jamming, and ATC restrictions can all require a mid-route change of course. If the pool of safely usable en-route alternate airports shrinks, long-haul flight operations can lose flexibility by more than simply flying a longer distance would suggest.

8. International and Geopolitical Assessment

8-1 The Difference Between "Legal Closure" and "Making Airspace Militarily Unusable"

Ukraine has no sovereign authority to legally close Russian airspace. Under the basic structure of the Chicago Convention, sovereignty over the airspace above a country's own territory belongs to the Russian Federation. At the same time, national and regional aviation authorities (such as EASA and the FAA) can impose bans or avoidance recommendations on the use of another country's airspace by their own registered aircraft and operators, which results in a split between "airlines that can use that airspace and airlines that cannot." This is the institutional reason why Ukraine's military capacity to affect the aviation safety environment of a given region, and the "legal authority to close" that airspace itself, are different concepts.

[Report Analysis] This asymmetry has held consistently since the war began. Ukraine closed its entire airspace by NOTAM immediately after the invasion began, while Russia never closed its own (see 4-1). The difference in the two countries' responses can be explained not only by their different positions as the invaded and the invading state, but also by the fact that, for Russia, continuing to accept civil aviation carried real necessity for its domestic economy and logistics. Ukraine's act of raising concerns with ICAO is a legitimate exercise of the procedural rights it holds as a party to the Chicago Convention, and does not in itself have the effect of legally closing Russian airspace — a point that is the flip side of the distinction drawn here between "legal closure" and "making airspace militarily unusable."

8-2 Aviation Insurance: A Third Layer

It is significant that Zelensky's statement named not only "airlines" but also "insurers." Even when airspace is legally open, commercial operations cannot proceed unless conditions align across aircraft owners and lessors, hull insurance, war-risk insurance, and reinsurance. In 2026, Lloyd's Market Association pushed back on reports suggesting that war cover had been uniformly suspended for airlines flying through open Middle East airspace, stating that insurance capacity itself still exists. [17]

[Important Caveat] As of the reference date, no primary source has been identified confirming that major aviation insurance markets have uniformly excluded the whole of Russian airspace from coverage,

and it would be incorrect to assert that "insurance has become completely unavailable." That said, a real structure does exist in which commercial airlines can become unable to use certain airspace de facto — even without a government closure — through rising war-risk premiums, regional coverage exclusions, and short-notice cancellation clauses (industry commentary generally cites around seven days' notice provision).

8-3 Overflight Rights as a Diplomatic Card

Overflight rights are not only a matter of aviation technology; they are also bound up with national sovereignty, diplomatic relations, sanctions, bilateral air-service agreements, and market access. Since 2022, a gap in operating conditions has opened between "airlines that can use Russian airspace" and "airlines that cannot, for diplomatic or sanctions reasons." This points to a framework of three independent conditions — (1) airspace that is diplomatically accessible, (2) airspace that is safely accessible, and (3) airspace that is economically rational to use — which do not necessarily all hold at once (see Figure 7).

9. Analysis of Eurasian Air Corridors — Avoiding Russia Leads to the Middle East

The air corridors between East Asia and Europe can broadly be organized into the following three (see Figure 2).

- Northern corridor: via Russia/Siberia (the dominant route before the invasion)
- Central/southern corridor: China – Central Asia – the Caucasus / Middle East – Turkey – Europe
- Pacific/Arctic corridor: near Japan – the North Pacific – Alaska/the Arctic – Europe

If Russia is avoided, Central Asia and the Middle East become the leading alternative routes geographically. However, as far as this report's additional research has confirmed, the state of the Middle East in 2026 means this corridor cannot simply be treated as a "safe detour."

[Confirmed Fact] On February 28, 2026, the United States and Israel carried out military strikes on multiple sites inside Iran, and Iran retaliated. This military conflict created elevated risk not only over Iranian airspace but also over the airspace of neighboring countries hosting US bases, or of countries affected by combat and interception activity. A provisional US–Iran ceasefire was announced on April 8, 2026 and subsequently extended, though clashes that appeared to breach the ceasefire also occurred in June and July. [18][19]

[Official/Agency Assessment] As of September 2026, EASA continues to recommend avoidance at all altitudes for the airspace of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, while applying a milder, one-level caution — "exercise caution regarding potential risk" — to Saudi Arabia and Israel. The FAA likewise maintains flight prohibitions under SFAR 77 (Iraq/Baghdad FIR), SFAR 117 (Iran/Tehran FIR), SFAR 114 (Syria/Damascus FIR), and SFAR 115 (Yemen/Sanaa FIR). [20][21]

[Confirmed Fact] Yemen's civil war reignited from July 2026, with the Houthis (Ansar Allah) seizing the strategic Red Sea islands of Perim (Mayun) and Greater and Lesser Hanish, tightening their grip on the Bab el-Mandeb Strait. The Houthis have also continued missile and drone attacks on targets inside Saudi Arabia (including Abha Airport and the area around King Khalid Air Base), while Saudi forces have carried out airstrikes inside Yemen (including the port of Mocha). Maritime security agencies have also warned that preparations appear to be underway for attacks on shipping in the Red Sea. [22][23][24]

[Report Analysis] Taken together, while it would be an excessive generalization to say "the entire Middle East is off-limits to flights," as of September 2026 the airspace of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen, as well as the southern Red Sea (around the Bab el-Mandeb Strait), are clearly designated as areas to be avoided under EASA and FAA guidance. Flights that avoid Russia therefore cannot unconditionally shift to a safe Middle East route; the Middle East carries its own independent military and security risks. The partial closure of Doha's airspace, among other effects, is also touching the hub operations of the Gulf states themselves. [25]

As a result, the East Asia–Europe air corridor cannot be called uniformly safe either to the north (Russia)

or to the center/south (the Middle East), raising the relative importance of the Pacific/Arctic corridor (via Alaska and the Arctic). That said, this large northern detour represents a far greater geographic diversion for flights originating in China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia, whereas Tokyo-departure flights have relatively good access to the North Pacific and Alaska — a geographic asymmetry worth noting.

10. Implications for Japan and East Asian Aviation

Because JAL and ANA have already built their European networks on the assumption of avoiding Russia, a further rise in risk over western Russia represents only a limited additional cost for the "newly avoiding Russia" for either carrier. What is more likely to change is the competitive landscape.

As long as Chinese carriers continue to operate their European routes via Russia, they retain a two-to-three-hour flight-time advantage on China–Europe routes, which also tends to sustain low-fare capacity on Japan–China–Europe connecting itineraries. JAL and ANA offer the convenience of direct flights, but continue to bear the burden of avoiding Russia in terms of fuel, aircraft utilization, and crew costs. Conversely, if worsening conditions in the Middle East or a further rise in Russia-related risk eventually force Chinese carriers to avoid western Russia as well, the structural cost advantage Chinese carriers currently enjoy would narrow, which could work as a normalizing factor for the competitive conditions facing JAL, ANA, Lufthansa, Air France, KLM, Finnair, and others.

Japan-departure/arrival flights operated by Air India, Turkish Airlines, Qatar Airways, and others did not use Russian airspace within the range of actual 2026 flight-path samples this report examined, so the direct impact of the Russian-airspace issue on them is limited. This should instead be understood as a question affecting the structure of these carriers' own "Russia flights" or their third-country network more broadly.

The impact on air cargo could be greater than on passenger flights. A route extension of even a few hours has a direct effect on payload-range economics (the trade-off between payload and range), and weight restrictions can reduce the capacity available for high-value cargo. If Chinese carriers are

eventually forced into similar detours, their relative advantage in China–Europe cargo transport would likely narrow as well.

11. Future Risk Scenarios

Looking out over the next six to twelve months, it would not be appropriate to treat "the full closure of Russian airspace" as the only possible outcome. The following are multiple, mutually non-exclusive scenarios.

- Continuation of current use: Russia continues to assert that operations are safe, and Chinese, Turkish, and Gulf carriers continue flying — the scenario closest to reality as of the reference date
- Expanding voluntary avoidance by airlines: even without a major accident, individual carriers increasingly avoid western Russia as on-time performance and SMS (safety management system) ratings deteriorate
- High-risk designation by the insurance market: rather than a blanket suspension of coverage, rising war-risk premiums and the triggering of short-notice cancellation clauses lead some carriers to effectively stop operating, without any government closure
- Suspension of Russia flights by major foreign carriers: Turkish, Gulf, and Central Asian carriers that fly direct to Russia reconsider operations, citing unpredictable schedule risk from frequent airport closures
- Stronger warnings from ICAO and national authorities: rather than ICAO itself issuing a global ban, it is institutionally more realistic that other authorities adopt EASA-style CZIBs and extend restrictions to their own operators
- Recurrence of a major civil aviation accident: if a misidentification accident similar to AZAL 8243 recurs, voluntary avoidance, insurance, and official recommendations could move simultaneously, rapidly advancing a de facto closure in a short period

- Avoidance limited to western Russia, with continued use of Siberia and the Far East: the fact that EASA's guidance targets only territory west of 60° E shows that the authorities themselves do not treat the whole of Russia as a uniform risk. Because most of the time savings Chinese carriers gain comes from transiting western Russia, avoiding only the western portion would not fully preserve this advantage
- Re-escalation in the Middle East: should the Iran-Israel ceasefire collapse, or should the Yemeni civil war or Red Sea situation deteriorate further, the reliability of the alternative Central Asia/Middle East corridor would decline further still, potentially narrowing the options across the Eurasian air corridor as a whole

12. Conclusion

Neither the simplistic conclusion that "Russian airspace is dangerous, so it should not be flown" nor the conclusion that "the Middle East is dangerous too, so it cannot be flown either" is the conclusion this report seeks to draw. Reporting Zelensky's September 1, 2026 statement as "Ukraine closed Russian airspace" is inaccurate both legally and operationally. The accurate reading is that Ukraine, backed by its own long-range strike capability, is warning airlines, insurers, and ICAO to reconsider treating Russian airspace as a safe civil aviation space, and is thereby pushing toward a de facto closure achieved through voluntary avoidance, national regulations, and the insurance market.

At the same time, it would also be inappropriate to dismiss this as mere political rhetoric. Several independent indicators — the AZAL 8243 accident, repeated GNSS jamming, frequent airport closures around Moscow and the North Caucasus, and EASA's recommendation to avoid all altitudes west of 60° E — show that civil aviation risk in western Russia, at minimum, has qualitatively worsened since the early days of the invasion in 2022.

At the same time, in the Middle East, military conflict between Iran, Israel, and the United States, the resurgence of the Yemeni civil war, and military action over control of strategic Red Sea points are all underway, and EASA and the FAA continue to recommend avoiding the airspace of Iran, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, and Yemen. The simple idea that avoiding Russia secures a safe detour does not hold; airlines now

have to evaluate safety, diplomatic conditions, and economics individually across multiple corridors — north (Russia), central (the Middle East), and Pacific-side (the Arctic/Alaska).

The central message this report puts forward as its conclusion is this: in international aviation going forward, not just how many hours to the destination but which sky an aircraft flies through is becoming an increasingly important factor shaping an airline's operating efficiency and a traveler's choices. For Japanese aviation policy and specialist reporting as well, the simple classification of "which airlines use Russia and which don't" needs to give way to a more granular evaluation — which FIR, which longitude band, which route, which time period, and under what insurance terms a given carrier is actually operating.

13. Figures and Data

The figures below visualize the content of this report; figure numbers are cross-referenced at the relevant points in the body text. The content corresponding to Figures 4 and 5 is already presented in the body as tables in Chapter 5 (5-1, "Airlines Using Russian Airspace," and 5-2, "Distinguishing Japan-Departure Flights from Russian Airspace Use"), so this section shows the conceptual and timeline diagrams (Figures 1, 2, 3, 6, and 7) only.

Figure 1　Timeline of Russian Aviation Risk, 2022–2026

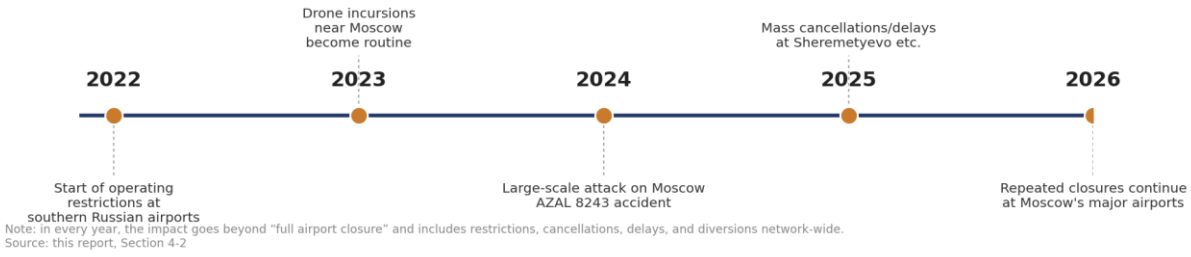
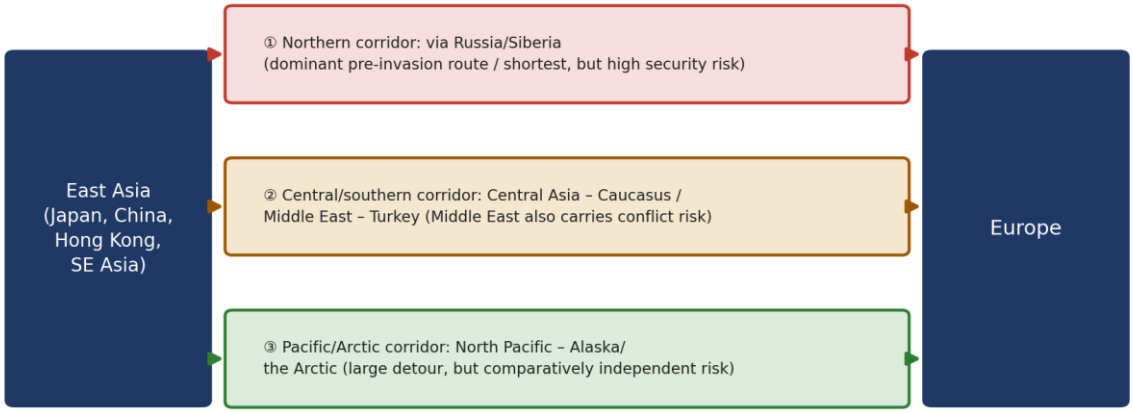


Figure 2　Comparing the Three East Asia–Europe Air Corridors



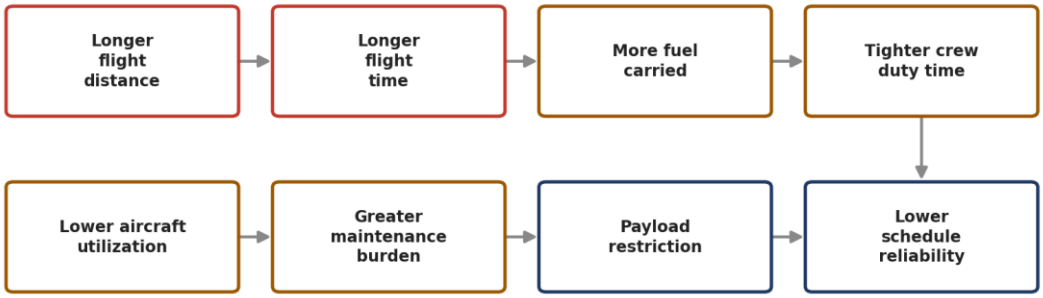
Note: route ③ is a large detour for flights from China, Hong Kong, and Southeast Asia, but Tokyo-departure flights have relatively good access to it.
Source: this report, Section 9

Figure 3 From UAS Incursion to Civil Aviation Risk: the Accident Chain



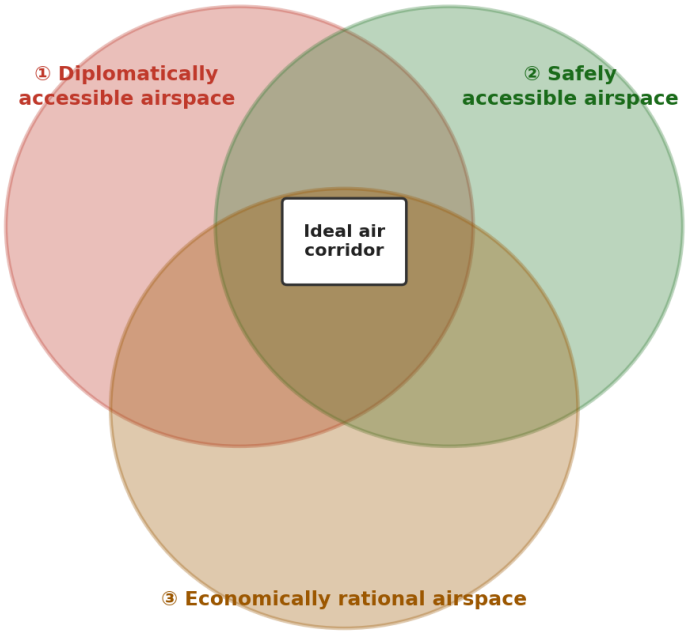
Note: this chain illustrates a structural possibility; it does not assert that it occurred in any specific case. Source: this report, Section 6

Figure 6 The Operating-Cost Chain of Avoiding Russia



Note: the arrows show a plausible direction of effect, not strict causal necessity. Source: this report, Section 7

Figure 7　A Three-Condition Model: Diplomatically / Safely / Economically Accessible Airspace



Note: the three conditions are independent and are not necessarily satisfied simultaneously. Source: this report, Section 8-3

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Limitations and disclaimer: This report is an analysis prepared from OSINT (open-source information) and does not rely on non-public information from governments, militaries, or airlines. Public flight data such as ADS-B depends on receiver conditions and third-party aggregation, so descriptions of individual actual flight paths carry inherent limitations. The military situation remains fluid, and the content reflects publicly available information as of the reference date (September 14, 2026). Readers should always confirm current operational status with the official announcements of individual airlines and regulators.