

Air Spat With Minsk Settled

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Aeroflot seems to have lost out in a new deal between Russian and Belarusian aviation authorities.

Vladimir Filonov

Russian and Belarusian air authorities have settled their dispute over flights, in a move which may see Belarusian companies providing internal flights in Russia and vice versa.

"We've agreed to do our homework on the idea of liberalization of air travel with the goal of providing flights on internal routes in Russia and Belarus," said Russian Deputy Transportation Minister Valery Okulov.

The two countries had been quarreling since March 27 over the number of daily flights each country could undertake on the route. Under the previous agreement, there were five flights by Russia and four by Belarus. This will continue until April 27, when the number of flights will be shared equally, Belarusian Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Kalinin told journalists on Monday, Kommersant reported.

"In summer we will have five flights each," he said.

But Belavia is unsure as to whether it will use the extra available journey, general director Anatoly Gusarov told Interfax.

"We are studying the situation and are going to define whether it is worth undertaking this flight or not," he said Tuesday.

Experts are seeing this as coup for Belarusian companies but believe that Russian ones will not be interested in the opportunity to fly within Belarus.

"Russian air companies are hardly going to want to develop flights in Belarus and fly, for example, from Minsk to Gomel," said Alexei Sinitsky, editor of Airtransport Review magazine.

Aeroflot seems to have lost out in the deal. The scandal was believed to have started because the Russian state carrier wanted more than its three scheduled flights to Minsk per day. But they may now lose one of their flights to S7 or UTair, Kommersant reported. Aeroflot declined to comment on the decision.

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