

2 Airliners Targeted by Blinding Lasers

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Pilots of two airliners complained of being targeted by blinding laser beams while in flight from Moscow airports over the weekend.

The crew of a Transaero Boeing 777-200 flying from Moscow's Sheremetyevo Airport to the Egyptian resort of Hurghada alerted air traffic controllers in Krasnodar on Saturday night that someone in the capital of the Adygea republic was shining a laser into the cockpit, Interfax reported.

"The unidentified person tried to blind the Transaero pilots for 20 seconds as they flew over Maikop at 10:12 p.m. at an altitude of 11,000 meters," an official at the air traffic control center told Interfax.

The flight was not disrupted and continued to its destination.

In the second incident, someone aimed a green laser beam into the cockpit of UTair ATR-72 turboprop as it approached the Nizhny Novgorod airport to land at 10:55 p.m. Saturday night,

Interfax said. The plane, which had taken off from Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, safely landed at 11:04 p.m.

It was not immediately clear how many passengers were on the two flights. But depending on the cabin configurations, the 777-200 can carry 300 to 440 passengers and the ATR-72 carries 68 to 74 passengers.

Pilots have regularly complained about being targeted by laser pointers in Russia over the past year. No accidents have occurred, but the State Duma has approved in a first reading a bill that would toughen penalties for people convicted of pointing lasers at planes. Currently, offenders face a small fine.

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