

## Ukraine claims airspace safe while more airlines suspend flights

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Dhaka: Ukraine on February 21 said that about 10 airlines had stopped flying there amid the United States warnings of an attack by Russian forces massed on its border. However, the country insisted its airspace is still open and flying to the East European country is safe.

Germany's Lufthansa said it was halting flights to Ukraine from February 21, joining Amsterdam based KLM, which has already done so.

Scandinavian airline SAS also cancelled weekly flights while Air France has decided to suspend February 22's flights between Paris and Kyiv as a "precautionary measure".

"The current cancellation of flights by a number of foreign airlines is dictated solely by the information aggravation of the situation, and not by real changes in flight safety," Infrastructure Minister Oleksandr Kubrakov said.

He did not name the airlines and said that "the state is working to replace cancelled flights".

Kubrakov said Ukraine International Airlines (UIA) had already opened ticket sales and increased the capacity of aircraft on additional flights from Kyiv to Munich and Geneva,

which Lufthansa was unable to operate.

Ukraine said 13 planes were still active. The airline has a total of 26 aircraft in its fleet but nine of those left the country last week for storage sites in Europe - including seven on February 14 alone, according to reports.

The exodus came after two Ukrainian airlines disclosed problems in securing insurance for some of their flights as Russia masses a huge military force on its border.

Russia and Ukraine both hinted at fresh diplomatic efforts to avoid conflict on February 21, but Ukraine's biggest airline said its insurers had already terminated cover for at least some of its aircraft on flights inside Ukrainian airspace.

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