

**A private jet flew from Inverness to Russia on the morning of Saturday 26 February, long before the CAA's Siren notification to airports was received by HIAL at 1915 that day.**

- Although the destination of the aircraft was Russia, it was Estonian registered. We do not know who chartered the aircraft or the nature of their connections with Russia
- The handling company at Inverness, being aware of the NOTAM issued on Friday, in advance of the CAA's SIREN Notification, liaised with UK agencies (Border Force and Special Branch) to satisfy themselves that the flight could depart given the destination and the rules on aircraft chartered by persons connected with Russia.
- On the day of departure, the air traffic controller on duty at Inverness, sought and received confirmation from NATS Centre at Prestwick that the aircraft could depart. GDPR prevented disclosure of the names of passengers but we understand it was a family of three. **[REDACTED]** (update, 27 Feb)

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 27 February 2022 11:41  
To: [REDACTED]  
Cc: Chief Executive Transport Scotland <[REDACTED]> Pacitti F  
(Frances) <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Press Transport Scotland  
[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] >  
Subject: RE: Update on Ukraine invasion and SG actions: 27 February

[REDACTED] –

Further to our call a few minutes ago, we have information from Inverness Airport that would be worth flagging in your next update.

INV has advised that yesterday morning they had an Estonian registered jet leave INV for Russia. It was handled by Signature, one of the Private Jet handling companies operating at Inverness.

The information from the CAA confirming the UKGs position on flights was received by the airport at 1915 last night, so well after the aircraft had departed. But, we understand from Inverness Airport that Ian Blackford MP plans to raise a question with the PM and/or SofS for Transport later today about the use of aircraft registered in places other than Russia being used to fly between the UK and Russia. (A fair point given the extent to which business jets are registered in tax havens like the Isle of Man).

Aside from country of registration, the restrictions also include aircraft “owned, chartered or operated (where different from the owner) by a person connected to Russia.”

Inverness Airport are seeking further information from Signature. It may of course be that the aircraft movement was permissible and there was no connection with Russia other than the destination of the flight, but it would be worth giving Ministers a heads up in your next update just in case.

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 27 February 2022 17:36  
**To:** [REDACTED] >; Chief Executive Transport  
Scotland [REDACTED] >  
**Cc:** Pacitti F (Frances) [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Press Transport Scotland  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] >;  
DG Net Zero <[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
<[REDACTED] >; TS Resilience Mailbox  
<[REDACTED] >  
**Subject:** RE: Update on Ukraine invasion and SG actions: 27 February - The Sun

-  
[https://twitter.com/lanblackford\\_MP/status/1497893294998700034?t=XmAbG5BxfKx5yTwau9Sgew&s=19](https://twitter.com/lanblackford_MP/status/1497893294998700034?t=XmAbG5BxfKx5yTwau9Sgew&s=19)

Hi, we've been asked to confirm the accuracy of this tweet by The Sun  
HIAL have passed across to us for comment.

Grateful for a steer.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

Sent with BlackBerry Work ([www.blackberry.com](http://www.blackberry.com))

From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 27 February 2022 17:43  
To: [REDACTED] Chief Executive  
Transport Scotland [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] >  
Cc: Pacitti F (Frances) [REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
Press Transport Scotland  
[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]  
DG Net Zero <[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] TS Resilience Mailbox  
<[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** RE: Update on Ukraine invasion and SG actions: 27 February - The Sun

[REDACTED]

Thanks. Refer to DFT on the timing of the issue of guidance to airports and to respond to point about aircraft being registered elsewhere.

It is correct that info for airports was issued about a day after the ban came into effect. But, didn't make any difference in this case the INV guys did the right thing and sought agreement from NATS which agreed that the flight should be allowed to depart.

FM wants a letter to UKG asking for clarification of "connection to Russia" in the rules – i.e. while the flight was Estonian registered, does the fact that it was flying to Vnukova mean that there was a "connection to Russia".

So I'd leave lines to DFT on the specifics of this, then we might do something tomorrow to say we're asking UKG to clarify this point.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



From: [REDACTED]  
Sent: 27 February 2022 18:58  
To: Minister for Transport [REDACTED]; Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport <[REDACTED]>  
Cc: [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Press Transport Scotland  
<[REDACTED]>; Pacitti F (Frances) <[REDACTED]>;  
Pacitti F (Frances) [REDACTED]; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Press Transport Scotland [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] DG Net Zero <[REDACTED]>  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] TS Resilience Mailbox  
[REDACTED] Chief  
Executive Transport Scotland <[REDACTED]> Communications Net Zero & Rural  
Affairs <[REDACTED]>; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special  
Adviser) <[REDACTED]>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)  
[REDACTED]; Mackintosh E (Emily) <[REDACTED]>  
Higgins K (Kate) <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** The Sun - private flight from Inverness to Moscow

Evening [REDACTED] PO,

Please see attached an update on aviation matters. The Sun query referred to in the attached note was prompted by this tweet:

-

[https://twitter.com/lanblackford\\_MP/status/1497893294998700034?t=XmAbG5BxfKx5yTwau9Sgew&s=19](https://twitter.com/lanblackford_MP/status/1497893294998700034?t=XmAbG5BxfKx5yTwau9Sgew&s=19)

I gather this issue has already been covered in the various calls/briefings/notes today, I just wanted to flag The Sun's interest in case it comes up on GMS/at tomorrow's photocall. We haven't issued a formal comment at this stage, just advised this is one for DfT to clarify.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED] > On Behalf Of Minister for Transport  
Sent: 27 February 2022 19:59  
To: [REDACTED] Minister for Transport  
[REDACTED]; Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport  
[REDACTED] >  
Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Press Transport Scotland  
[REDACTED] >; Pacitti F (Frances) <[REDACTED]>;  
Pacitti F (Frances) <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
Press Transport Scotland <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]; DG Net Zero <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] TS Resilience Mailbox  
[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED]; Chief  
Executive Transport Scotland [REDACTED] >; Communications Net Zero & Rural  
Affairs <[REDACTED]>; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special  
Adviser) [REDACTED] >; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)  
[REDACTED] >; Mackintosh E (Emily) [REDACTED] >;  
Higgins K (Kate) <[REDACTED]>  
Subject: RE: The Sun - private flight from Inverness to Moscow

Hi [REDACTED]

Thanks – Ms Gilruth has noted and would welcome lines ahead of tomorrow’s photo-call when they come in.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Deputy Private Secretary  
Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Extract of Internal email with Transport Scotland (TS) / Scottish Government (SG) Officials on Inverness Airport – 27 February 2022 at 20:55

From: [REDACTED] [REDACTED] >  
Sent: 27 February 2022 20:55  
To: Minister for Transport [REDACTED]; Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport <[REDACTED]>  
Cc: [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] Press Transport Scotland  
<[REDACTED] Pacitti F (Frances) <[REDACTED]>;  
Pacitti F (Frances) <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Press Transport Scotland <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] DG Net Zero <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] IS Resilience Mailbox  
[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] Chief  
Executive Transport Scotland [REDACTED] >; Communications Net Zero & Rural  
Affairs <[REDACTED]>; Nicolson S (Stuart) (Special  
Adviser) [REDACTED] >; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)  
[REDACTED] >; Mackintosh E (Emily) <[REDACTED]>;  
Higgins K (Kate) <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** RE: The Sun - private flight from Inverness to Moscow

Hi [REDACTED] based on [REDACTED] note, we would suggest:

### **Inverness private jet flight (if asked)**

We understand a private jet flew from Inverness to Russia on Saturday morning, before the CAA's notification to airports was received by Inverness Airport. Although the destination of the aircraft was Russia, it was Estonian registered. The handling company at Inverness, being aware of the NOTAM issued on Friday, liaised with UK agencies (Border Force, Special Branch and NATS) to satisfy themselves that the flight could depart given the destination and the rules on aircraft chartered by persons connected with Russia. We understand that the handling company received confirmation from NATS Centre at Prestwick that they aircraft could depart.

**From:** [REDACTED] **On Behalf Of** Minister for Transport

**Sent:** 28 February 2022 07:51

**To:** [REDACTED] Minister for Transport <[REDACTED]>; Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport <[REDACTED]>

**Cc:** [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Press Transport Scotland  
<[REDACTED]> Pacitti F (Frances)  
<[REDACTED]> Pacitti F (Frances)  
<[REDACTED]> >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
Press Transport Scotland  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
DG Net Zero <[REDACTED]> >; [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
IS Resilience Mailbox  
[REDACTED] >; [REDACTED] Chief  
Executive Transport Scotland <[REDACTED]> >; Communications Net Zero

& Rural Affairs <[REDACTED]>; Nicolson S  
(Stuart) (Special Adviser) <[REDACTED]>; Ingebrigtsen R (Ross)  
<[REDACTED]>; Mackintosh E (Emily)  
<[REDACTED]>; Higgins K (Kate) <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** RE: The Sun - private flight from Inverness to Moscow

Hi [REDACTED]

Ms Gilruth is content with those lines.

Thanks,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]  
Deputy Private Secretary  
Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport

[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

**From:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
**Sent:** 28 February 2022 11:56  
**To:** [REDACTED] >; Inglis Lyon [REDACTED] >;  
[REDACTED] >  
**Cc:** [REDACTED]; HIAL [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** RE: Flight  
**Importance:** High

Inglis [REDACTED] – My understanding is that HIAL did everything required in line with NOTAM, contacting Border Force and NATS before the plane departed.

[REDACTED] I don't think HIAL should get directly involved in this now public political spat – but would not want HIAL to be accused of acting inappropriately here, so would appreciate your guidance on a response to the Herald, we also have a similar query from The Sun awaiting a response. Wonder if this should be for to TS, rather than HIAL, given the politics?

Just about to head on travels and will be offline for next while so appreciate if you could get back to Inglis and [REDACTED] so appropriate action/response can be given.

Best

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Head of Communications  
Highlands and Islands Airports Limited

Tel: [REDACTED]

From: [REDACTED]

Sent: 28 February 2022 12:04

To: [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>; [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] >; Inglis Lyon <[REDACTED]>

Cc: [REDACTED] HIAL [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>

Subject: RE: Flight

[REDACTED] – We'd not respond. I think we pushed the Sun on to UKG seeing as the question was about timing of info for airports being a day later than NOTAM.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



An agency of  The Scottish Government

Extract of Internal email with Transport Scotland (TS) / Scottish Government (SG)  
Officials on airspace restrictions– 28 February 2022 at 14:39

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 28 February 2022 14:39  
**To:** Cabinet Secretary for Net Zero, Energy and Transport  
[REDACTED]  
**Cc:** First Minister [REDACTED] >; Cabinet Secretary for Constitution,  
External Affairs and Culture < [REDACTED] >; Minister for Transport  
[REDACTED] >; Deputy First Minister and Cabinet Secretary for Covid  
Recovery < [REDACTED] >; Permanent Secretary  
< [REDACTED] >; DG Net Zero < [REDACTED] >; Chief  
Executive Transport Scotland < [REDACTED] >; Pacitti F (Frances)  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] TS Resilience Mailbox  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] Higgins K (Kate) < [REDACTED] >  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
**Subject:** UK AIRSPACE RESTRICTIONS  
**Importance:** High

### **Inverness Departure**

8. On the SGoRR call yesterday the First Minister asked about the flight which departed Inverness on Saturday morning bound for Vnukovo. This aircraft was Estonian and therefore not covered by the restrictions as they relate to aircraft registration.

9. The handling company at Inverness were aware of the NOTAM and the restrictions. Given the destination of the flight, air traffic control staff at Inverness checked with NATS at Prestwick. The NATS Centre at Prestwick handles air traffic across northern England, Scotland and out into North East Atlantic. NATS confirmed that the flight could depart. The ground handling company at Inverness also confirmed that they had consulted UK Border Force and Special Branch, both of which confirmed that there was no issue with allowing the aircraft to depart. While GDPR prevents sharing information on the identity of those on board, and the aircraft was Estonian registered and operated, we can only assume that NATS and other agencies were content that the aircraft was **not** chartered by a national of Russia or

a company incorporated or headquartered in Russia and therefore did not fall within the scope of the ban.

10. Highlands and Islands Airport have confirmed that their handling companies do not have any Russian registered aircraft booked in, or any aircraft with a Scotland-Russia or Russia-Scotland flight plan booked in. Of course, the flexibility offered by private jets mean that bookings can be made at very short notice. HIAL (and Prestwick) will keep us informed of any intended departure to Russia. Any inbound flights from Russia will of course have been given permission to enter UK airspace before they arrive at any Scottish airport.

### **Next Steps**

12. In relation to the departure from Inverness, it is clear that the team at Inverness did the right thing by seeking and obtaining agreement from NATS before allowing the flight to depart. There does not seem to be any follow up required. As noted above HIAL will keep us informed about any further flights to/from Russia as they are booked in.

From: [REDACTED] >  
Sent: 27 February 2022 20:18  
To: [REDACTED]  
Subject: Russia Ban

[REDACTED] – Good evening, hope you're well. I was on a call with our FM earlier and she asked about the ban. In particular she was keen to know how wide the definition of a "connection with Russia" is and how it's to be interpreted.

I see Ian Blackford MP has been on Twitter highlighting a case where a business jet (Estonian registered) was allowed to leave INV yesterday (with the agreement of NATS Prestwick) bound for Moscow and he's portraying this as a "loophole". I'm not sure there's a loophole here as these passengers could equally have flown out on Finnair via Helsinki or some other connecting route. But, it would be good to have a few lines on how "connection with Russia" is to be interpreted and that might avoid the need for an exchange of Ministerial letters.

Can be available at any time if you want to give me a shout...

Thanks

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



An agency of  The Scottish Government



airport authorities in the UK of the right to check the status of the flight against the restrictions that apply to Russia.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



An agency of  The Scottish Government

**From:** [REDACTED] >  
**Sent:** 04 March 2022 11:15  
**To:** Minister for Transport [REDACTED]  
**Subject:** Flight to Russia

Dear Minister,

It has been reported by Mr I Blackford MP that a charter flight took off from Inverness airport recently direct to Moscow in contravention of the ban on such flights. He was rightly aggrieved. As a former senior RAF officer and director of Loganair residing in Scotland, I am also appalled this was allowed by HIAL and the Scottish Government.

Could you please enlighten me as to the following:

- a) Is there an enquiry into the circumstances surrounding this event.
- b) Who is going to held responsible for allowing this and
- c) What measures have been taken to prevent this happening from all Scottish airports in the future.

Yours Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows

**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 March 2022 14:52  
**To:** [REDACTED] <[REDACTED]>  
**Subject:** Russian Flight

**CAUTION:** This email originated from outside of the organisation. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognise the sender and know the content is safe.

[REDACTED]

Thanks for your help earlier. Inglis mentioned previously that he was going to ask you to transcribe the transcript from the Inverness Tower in relation to the aircraft that departed for Russia last month. Do you have that transcript? I've got to respond to an enquiry about the flight and it would be helpful to see the transcript before I do so.

Thanks

[REDACTED]



**From:** [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** 22 March 2022 14:55  
**To:** [REDACTED] >  
**Subject:** RE: Russian Flight

Hi [REDACTED]

Apologies, I thought these had been sent to you, please find attached.

Kind regards

[REDACTED]

Highlands and Islands Airports Limited / Head Office, Inverness Airport, Inverness IV2 7JB  
[REDACTED] / w. [www.hial.co.uk](http://www.hial.co.uk)  
Working hours Mon – Fri 08:30 - 16:30

**Transcript 1 of audio recording AUD-20220311-WA0000.m4a.**  
**Conversation between Inverness Tower Assistant (ITA) and [REDACTED] from the Highland Jet Centre (D)**  
**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 08:16am**

ITA: Inverness Tower Assistant.  
D: Oh Hello, Its [REDACTED] at the Highland Jet Centre here.  
ITA: Yep?  
D: Hello, umm, we've got a bit of a query for you, umm, we've got this aircraft, ESPVT, flying out to Russia this morning...  
ITA: Yep?  
D: Now... they've actually, the company that's called, that's involved, have sent us an email on a NOTAM which says that no aircraft that's owned, chartered or operated by a person connected with Russia, or which is registered in Russia shall fly in the United Kingdom airspace...  
ITA: Right...

D: Now, the aircraft is coming in, it's an Estonian aircraft, it's coming in from, umm, Amsterdam, however it is flying to Russia, umm, with a Russian family (pause) is that allowed, I don't know?

ITA: I have absolutely no idea.

D: Umm, will that be allowed to leave here, because basically, obviously, this Russian family has chartered the aircraft?

ITA: I have absolutely no idea, umm, it's not a Russian registered aircraft?

D: It's not a Russian registered aircraft, no, it's Estonian.

ITA: Umm, (pause) do you know, I don't know. I'll have a word with the Scottish Supervisor and see if they have any idea and I'll call you back shortly.

D: Okey Dokey, this aircraft is due in in half an hour.

ITA: Yeah, I've got... I've seen the flight plan. I'll have a word with the Scottish Supervisor and see what they say.

D: OK, Cheers then, bye bye

ITA: Bye

**Transcript 2 of audio recording AUD-20220311-WA0002.m4a.**  
**Conversation between Prestwick Centre (PC) and Inverness Tower Assistant (ITA)**  
**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 08:18am**

(Dial tone, phone dialling and phone ringing)

PC: Prestwick Centre.

ITA: Inverness Tower Assistant. Umm, I wonder perhaps, I wonder if you could possibly give us some advice.

PC: Go ahead.

ITA: OK, I have just had a phone call from one of the housing agents, I've got a Spanish registered aircraft coming in, in about half an hour, to take a Russian family to Moscow.

PC: Umm... uhh... yeah, I think I know the aircraft you're referring to...

ITA: Yeah, it's...umm... Solar One or something Solar one Charlie umm yeah they've seen a NOTAM saying no Russian registered aircraft are allowed to fly through or out of UK air space, does that apply to Charter do you know?

PC: So... umm... I'm being careful with what I'm saying it's... umm... the information at our end has been... umm...it's not that it's been sketchy, it's just that obviously people reacting very quickly to what's been happening...

ITA: Yeah

PC: Umm... the...uhh...we've been chatting about a few and...umm... the one out of Inverness we'd...umm... looked at earlier this morning as well. Umm...my understanding is that it would only be scheduled aircraft...umm..., we had a list of operators yesterday in terms of scheduled...umm...

ITA: Yeah...

PC: ...operators that we could potentially exclude, this would be a kind of a Euro controlled level in applying, essentially, a regulation to mean that they were unable to... umm... fly or through UK air space...

ITA: Yeah...

PC: ...but...umm, I don't believe at this time...that it... I guess ultimately... umm...us at Prestwick in terms of on-route... umm...it's difficult to... I think we try not to get drawn in to that role of policing in anyway...

ITA: OK, well if we were to get airborne...

PC: Yeah, I would say in the case of a private...umm...eh... charter like that... if it was a private charter or just a private aircraft...umm...based on where it's registered and the fact that the only clear cut thing for us is if it's a schedule flight or not...

ITA: Right

PC: ... I believe that you are, based on everything that I have in front of me...umm...I would certainly have no reason to intervene and I'm aware of the flight planned to depart from you later today...

ITA: OK

PC: ...umm...in terms of our instructions as well, the only other thing we've had...umm...is...umm...yeah just saying about...uhh...well essentially that...umm...that we would expect contact from the DFT if there was anything specific...

ITA: Right.

PC: And in the absence of that...umm...we shouldn't take any action, basically

ITA: OK, that's fine, I'll pass that onto the handlers.

PC: No problem.

ITA: If you've got anything else...umm...just feel free to let me know and we can always...umm... pass it on to our flow team and we'll get them to give you a call back, to provide further clarity.

ITA: Yep, it's just that one.

PC: Sorry that's not definitive, it's...uhh...unfortunately our end it's quite fluid as well, even in terms of...uhh...I was asking the question yesterday as to...umm...what the NOTAM is actually referring to by reference to...uhh...UK airspace, because it talks about...uhh...umm... UK airspace, including UK territorial seas...umm...and then...uhh...certainly my interpretation, bearing in mind that it included that, was, 'OK, that makes it sound like it's just the land mass of the UK and the seas immediately around it' because if it was the UK (inaudible) you'd would think it would just say that...umm... I think it's certainly an evolving picture, but ...umm...to reiterate, I don't have anything in front of me to suggest that...umm... you'd be doing anything wrong at the moment by...

ITA: Right...

PC: ...umm...by allowing that to depart

ITA: OK then.

PC: OK.

ITA: OK, that's great, Thanks for your help

PC: Thanks very much

ITA: Thanks

Both: Bye

**Transcript 3 of audio recording AUD-20220311-WA0001.m4a.**  
**Conversation between Scottish Assistant (SA) and Inverness Tower Assistant (ITA)**  
**Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> February 09:31am**

SA: Hello, Scottish Assistant.

ITA: Hello, It's Inverness. I'm requesting a Solar one.

SA: Solar One, Okey dokes... What 1424?

ITA: 1424 and our spot 6173.

SA: 6173 for your spot.

ITA: Um hmm (affirmative)

SA: Thank you

ITA: Cheers

SA: Bye



## Aviation, Maritime, Freight & Canals

Victoria Quay, Edinburgh EH6 6QQ

[REDACTED]



[REDACTED]

Your ref:

e-mail: [REDACTED]

Our ref:  
202200286781

Date:  
29 March 2022

Dear [REDACTED]

Thank you for your e-mail of 4 March 2022 to the Jenny Gilruth MSP, Minister for Transport, about the flight that took place between Inverness and Russia on 26 February 2022. I have been asked to reply.

The flight in question was permitted to depart Inverness as it was assessed as not being covered by the restrictions in place at the time. Both HIAL and the handling company at Inverness Airport were aware of the NOTAM that was issued on 25 February 2022. Given the destination of the flight, air traffic control staff at Inverness checked with NATS at Prestwick to confirm if the flight could operate. As you will be aware, the NATS Centre at Prestwick handles air traffic across northern England, Scotland and out into North East Atlantic. NATS confirmed that the flight could depart. The ground handling company at Inverness also confirmed that they had consulted UK Border Force and Special Branch, both of which confirmed that there was no issue with allowing the aircraft to depart.

It should be noted that the aircraft in question was Estonian registered and that the restrictions in place at the time related to Russian registered aircraft or aircraft registered elsewhere but owned, chartered or operated by a person "connected with Russia". There was nothing in the restrictions in place at the time that prevented an aircraft not covered by the NOTAM from flying to Russia.

Since the flight took place further restrictions have been introduced which would ensure that a similar flight can no longer be undertaken. The restrictions introduced are a matter for the UK Government and the Scottish Government has no power to dictate what services may operate from an airport in Scotland, including airports operated by HIAL.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]  
Aviation Policy