
'Terror more likely than tech failure': 5 things we know so far about missing EgyptAir plane

19/05/2016



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1. THE AIRCRAFT

On MS804, EgyptAir operated an Airbus A320 – a narrow-body airliner, considered safe and reliable in the industry to serve short- or medium-haul destinations. According to the Airbus' statement, this 13-year-old plane was delivered to EgyptAir in 2003 and has accumulated 48,000 flying hours in total.

Egyptian Aviation Minister Sherif Fathy told journalists the plane was in good technical condition and had passed all necessary safety checks.

In 2013, the missing A320 reportedly experienced engine failure, SkyNews Arabia said, citing an Egyptian civil aviation source. At that time, the aircraft was scheduled to fly from Cairo to Istanbul, but had to return for an emergency landing.

2. THOSE ON BOARD

On board the aircraft were 66 people, including 56 passengers – three of them children – and 10 crewmembers. The crew consisted of two pilots, five flight attendants and three security personnel. Among the passengers, EgyptAir listed 30 Egyptians, 15 French, two Iraqis and one citizen each from the UK, Belgium, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Chad, Portugal, Algeria and Canada.

The airline insists the pilots were highly experienced. The captain had 6,275 flying hours, including 2,101 on the A320, while his first officer had a total of 2,766 flying hours.

According to Greece's civil aviation authority, which has released a timeline of the plane's journey over national airspace, *"the pilot was in good spirits and thanked the [air traffic] controller in Greek"* before radio contact with MS804 was lost.

3. WHERE & WHEN MS804 WENT OFF RADAR SCREENS

The EgyptAir A320 took off from Charles de Gaulle at 11:09 p.m. local time (2109 GMT) on Wednesday and was expected to arrive in Cairo by 3 a.m. on Thursday. A direct flight usually lasts around four hours.

According to the latest update from EgyptAir, Flight MS804 went off the radar above the Mediterranean about 280km (175 miles) from the Egyptian seacoast at 2:30 a.m. Cairo time (0030 GMT) at an altitude of 37,000 feet (11,300 meters). Greek authorities have declared a 40-mile (64km) no-fly zone over their part of the airspace in the vicinity of the search zone in the southern Mediterranean, a Greek diplomat said in Cairo. The zone was established, based on the location of the last signal coming from the missing plane.

Previous reports also suggested that the plane crashed 130 miles from the Greek island of Karpathos, according to AFP, citing an aviation source in Greece.

4. TERRORIST ACT MORE LIKELY THAN TECHNICAL FAILURE

Fathy, Egypt's aviation minister, said that a terrorist attack *"was more likely"* to have taken down the missing EgyptAir flight than any other cause, but urged people not to draw any premature conclusions about the crash.

The director of the Russian Federal Security Service (FBS), Alexander Bortnikov, said his agency believes it was a terrorist attack that brought down the plane: *"To our utmost regret, one more accident happened to an aircraft of the Egyptian airline. Apparently, this is a terrorist act that killed 66 nationals of 12 countries."*

An Australian civil aviation expert, Geoffrey Thomas, told RT that the security system at Charles de Gaulle was good but not impenetrable: *"The one thing what the industry does fear is the 'inside job' when you have an airport worker who might be associated with some groups."*

"There's always a possibility that something is smuggled on board."

According to previous media reports, there have been serious security breaches in France's Charles de Gaulle and Orly airports, when dozens of staff were on spy watch for their sympathies or links to Islamist organizations.

5. POSSIBLE DEBRIS FOUND

As the search and rescue operation was in full swing, media reports said possible debris have been found by a Greek frigate. *"There have been finds southeast of Crete, inside the Cairo flight information region,"* spokesman for Greek army general staff Vassilis Beletsiotis was quoted by AFP as saying.

[@RT.com](http://on.rt.com/7d4s) Plastic red and white objects were found some 370 km south of island of Crete <http://on.rt.com/7d4s>



The objects reportedly were "*plastic*" and "*colored red and white objects*," Reuters reported earlier, citing defense sources. They were detected some 370 km south of the Greek island of Crete, close to the area where a transponder signal was emitted earlier.

Greek state TV ERT also said that two "*orange-colored*" objects and also life vests were spotted in the same area.

Egypt, France and Greece have joined forces in scrambling military aircraft and ships for a search operation in the area