

Russian Airliner Crash: The Islamic State (ISIS) “Claim of Responsibility”

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On October 31, Kolavia Metrojet (commercial airliner) Flight 7K9268 crashed 23 minutes after takeoff from Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, heading for St. Petersburg, Russia – killing all 217 passengers and seven crew members aboard, including 25 children.

News reports called the crash the worst aviation disaster in Russian history. Putin declared Sunday a day of mourning for its victims.

A criminal investigation began by searching operator Kogalymavia’s offices, checking for possible violations of Russian airliner safety standards.

A separate investigation is underway to determine the cause of the crash, most likely a technical failure. Russia’s Air Transport won’t speculate on what happened until more is known – including decoding the recovered black boxes, containing invaluable information.

A Sinai, Egypt based group connected to ISIS claimed responsibility, saying:

Soldiers of the Caliphate were able to bring down a Russian plane above Sinai Province with at least 220 Russian crusaders aboard.

They were all killed, praise be to God. O Russians, you and your allies take note that you are not safe in Muslims lands or their skies.

The killing of dozens daily in Syria with bombs from your planes will bring woe to you. Just as you are killing others, you too will be killed, God willing.

Russian Transportation Minister Maxim Sokolov dismissed the claim, saying it “cannot be considered credible. We are in a close contact with our Egyptian colleagues, with the aviation authorities of this country. At the moment, they have no information that would confirm such fabrications.”

Air France and Lufthansa said they’ll reroute their flights around Sinai until further notice, a temporary precautionary move.

The Russian aircraft was flying at an altitude of 31,000 feet – way above the ability of ground-based terrorist groups to down it. Their shoulder-launched surface-to-air missiles (SAMS), known as Manpads, threaten low-flying aircraft only, mainly helicopters – debunking their spurious claim. Expect investigation results to prove it.

French obtained weapons manuals recovered from North African Al Qaeda elements in 2013

showed they may have SA-7 and SA-7b SAMS – able to down taking off and landing aircraft, not the range to strike high-flying ones.

Reports from the crash site indicated debris scattered over at least a four mile area. It's being closely examined to help determine the cause of the disaster.

Most passengers were Russian, three from Ukraine and one from Belarus. Sharm El-Sheikh is a popular resort town. Most likely they were tourists heading home.

Air traffic control said the plane began descending rapidly at 6,000 feet per minute before it disappeared from radar. Airline officials issued a statement, saying "(i)n 2014, the airplane has undergone factory maintenance in accordance with the factory specifications. All requirements of preflight technical maintenance were fulfilled in full and on time."

Russian news reports said crew members recently complained about problems with one of the plane's engines – so far without official confirmation.

[RT International](#) interviewed UK security/counterterrorism expert Charles Shoebridge. "As far as it's known, Islamic State and its affiliate groups don't have the capability to bring down aircraft flying at the height that this aircraft reportedly was, which is something around 10,000 meters," he explained.

"That doesn't mean to say though that at least theoretically they couldn't bring the plane down by other means, for example by sabotage at the departing airport or a bomb on board." Most likely, "mechanical failure of some sort (was) the most likely cause, as with most air accidents." Terrorists like claiming responsibility for propaganda purposes, he added, especially targeting Russia for its ongoing Syrian campaign.

Egypt's former civil aviation minister, Wail al-Madawi, told RT "(o)nly a state (has) such resources" to strike high-flying aircraft. Asked if a SAM could have downed the Russian plane he said: "No, it is out of the question."

I am a former air force officer, and I have the expert knowledge that taking down a plane flying so high requires the kind of capacities only a state can have.

It requires some very significant resources: One would need search (three types of) radars, radars to locate the plane, radars to control the fire. Only a state can have such resources. No militant group like that can.

Addressing reports indicating the plane broke in two, he said "it's impossible to define how exactly the ground impact occurred. It all depends on the kind of terrain at the impact site." "For instance, if an aircraft were to hit some ridge on the ground, this could cause the plane to break into halves. So it all depends on the terrain."

The main thing, however, is to establish why the plane started to lose altitude when it was flying so high. There is a database of air crashes with proven causes of the crash. Some were due to technical malfunction, some to human error, some even to the psychological state of the crew. So that means there are a lot of possibilities to study.

Once results of the ongoing investigation are revealed, we'll know precisely what happened and why.

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