TWO AIRPORT STAFF DETAINED OVER RUSSIAN AIR CRASH

News / Airlines

Egyptian authorities have detained **two employees of Sharm el-Sheikh airport** for questioning in connection with the downing of the **Russian jet** on October 31 that killed all 224 people on board.

"Seventeen people are being held, two of them are suspected of helping whoever planted the bomb on the plane at Sharm el-Sheikh airport," said a security official who declined to be named.

An official said CCTV footage showed a baggage handler carrying a suitcase from an airport building to another man, who was loading luggage onto the doomed airliner.

An employee at the airport media department, who also preferred to remain anonymous, confirmed two members of the ground crew had been detained for questioning on Monday night.

The interior and civil aviation ministries' media departments denied in a statement that there had been any arrests.

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Russia's FSB security service said on Tuesday it was certain a bomb had brought down the plane, joining Britain and the United States in reaching that conclusion.

Egypt has not yet confirmed that a bomb was responsible, saying it wants to wait until all investigations are complete.

It was not immediately clear what role the employees had at the airport, which is Egypt's third-busiest, handling a vast number of charter and budget flights for tourists seeking sea and sun in the southern Sinai peninsula.

Separately, other people at the airport said security forces were searching for two employees who are suspected of leaving a baggage-scanning machine unattended for a period of time while passengers were boarding the Russian plane.

CCTV footage was being examined to confirm what happened.

The people said investigators had questioned all the airport staff involved with handling the Russian plane, its passengers and bags after the crash. No arrests had been made in the search for the two employees who were believed to have left from the baggage-scanning machine.

Since the disaster, many flights to and from Sharm el-Sheikh have been suspended, raising concerns that Egypt's tourism industry, worth about USD$7 billion a year and still a pillar of the economy despite having fallen sharply in recent years, will be further ravaged.

Alexander Bortnikov, the head of Russia's FSB, said the conclusion of Russian investigators was that a homemade bomb containing around 1 kg of TNT had detonated during the flight, causing the plane to break up in mid-air.

"We can unequivocally say it was a terrorist act," he said.

17 NOVEMBER 2015

SOURCE: REUTERS
ARTICLE LINK:
https://ids.50skyshades.com/news/airlines/two-airport-staff-detained-over-russian-air-crash

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