

Ethiopian Airlines Refutes ET 409 Crash Report

The Lebanese Authority Report Blames Pilot Error for the Flight ET 409 Accident

Addis Ababa: January 17, 2012: Ethiopian Airlines strongly refutes the final investigation report released today by the Lebanese Ministry of Public Works and Transport on the accident of ET 409 / 25 January 2010.

The Airline maintained that the Lebanese Government had been speculating the cause of the accident as pilot error right from the day of the accident contrary to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) Annex 13.

Mr Tewolde Gebremariam, Chief Executive Officer of Ethiopian Airlines stated: "We are not surprised that the investigation process in the last couple of years was used only to justify the speculation made publicly before the beginning of the investigation process. To this effect, the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Authority has appended its comments to the report and expressed its regrets and disagreement both in the investigation process and the final report. "

Mr. Tewolde added that the final report was biased, lacking evidence, incomplete and did not present the full account of the accident. He noted that the report contained numerous factual inaccuracies, internal contradictions and hypothetical statements that are not supported by evidence. He also added that the investigative authority denied the recovery of the wreckage and ignored crucial information such as security footage, autopsy and taxo-logical records, baggage screening X-ray records, terminal CCTV records, full CVR recovery and read out, victims' bodies were buried without medical examination and also declined to provide a detailed profile of passengers.

Capt. Desta Zeru, VP Flight Operations of Ethiopian Airlines said: "ATC officers and other airlines' pilots have witnessed a ball of fire on the aircraft in the air. All recordings of the Digital Flight Data Recorder and the Cockpit Voice Recorder stopped at 1300 ft. and the aircraft disappeared from radar screen at the same time. The last cockpit voice recording was also a loud noise which sounds like an explosion. All these facts clearly indicate that the aircraft disintegrated in the air due to explosion, which could have been caused by a shoot-down, sabotage, or lightening strike."

“Although the final report wrongly alleges that the captain’s actions, statements and degraded performance during that period were as a result of spatial disorientation and loss of situational awareness; the fact of the matter is the CVR and DFDR clearly show that the pilot was making appropriate inputs in an effort to control the aircraft. This contradicts the investigation assertion that the captain was under subtle incapacitation while he was making every effort to control the aircraft even under heavy gravity force. Moreover, both pilots were properly trained and qualified. The captain had over 20 years of experience with a total time of 10,233 hours and the crew pairing was in accordance with approved policy. The crew duty and rest time was in accordance with the regulation. Any characterization of our pilots contrary to the foregoing is pure fabrication that cannot stand any scrutiny,” said Mr Tewelde.

For 65 years Ethiopian Airlines has been one of the continent’s leading carriers unrivalled in Africa for its efficiency, safety and operational success. It prides itself in the high standards of its workforce including pilot, technicians and other highly qualified professionals.

About Ethiopian

Ethiopian Airlines, one of the largest and fastest growing airlines in Africa, made its maiden international flight to Cairo in 1946 and now the Airline provides dependable services to 63 international destinations spanning four continents.

Ethiopian is proud to be a Star Alliance Member. The Star Alliance network is the leading global airline network offering customers convenient worldwide reach and a smoother travel experience. The Star Alliance network offers more than 21,000 daily flights to 1,290 airports in 189 countries.

Ethiopian is a multi-award winner for its commitment and contributions towards the development and growth of the African aviation industry and in recognition of its distinguished long-haul operations enhanced by the introduction of new routes and products. In the recent past, Ethiopian received the 2011 AFRAA award for being consistently profitable over the years and has won the "AFRICAN CARGO AIRLINE OF THE YEAR 2011 Award" for its excellence in air cargo. Ethiopian also won the NEPAD Transport Infrastructure Excellence Awards 2009 and "the Airline of the Year 2009 Award" from the African Airlines Association (AFRAA).

With its acquisition of and firm orders for several new modern fleet, the airline is well positioned to pursue aggressively the implementation of its 2025 strategic plan to become the leading aviation group in Africa.

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