EGYPTAIR A320 HIJACKED

News / Airlines



An EgyptAir flight from Alexandria's Burg Al-Arab airport to Cairo was hijacked and forced to land in Larnaca, Cyprus, on Tuesday by a passenger reportedly wearing an explosive belt.

A hijacker informed the pilot of flight MS 181 he was wearing an explosive belt, the Egyptian Civil Aviation Ministry said in a statement. The Airbus A320 had 81 passengers, the ministry said. Cypriot authorities sent anti-terror forces to the airport, Sky News Arabia reported. The flight was scheduled to land in Cairo at 7:15 a.m.

Militant attacks in Egypt have surged since 2013, hampering the country's efforts to revive its economy and lure in foreign investors. A Russian passenger plane was brought down over Sinai in October in an attack claimed by the Islamic State group. Egyptian officials have yet to say what brought down the Metrojet flight. Russian authorities suspended flights to Egypt after the attack, which led to a broad review of airport security in the country.

Global airline and airport security officials are on heightened alert after bombs ripped through the airport in Belgium's capital Brussels last week. Asian airports had stepped up checks since the Paris terrorist attacks and the suspected bombing of the Russian aircraft over Sinai.

"Pilot Omar El-Gamal was informed that one of the passengers threatened that he had an

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explosive belt and forced the pilot to land in Larnaca," EgyptAir said on Twitter.

An official with the Cypriot Ministry of Justice and Public Order said a crisis meeting was being held between the Foreign Ministry and the justice minister and with police. The official spoke on condition of anonymity, in line with policy.

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