EGYPTAIR BLACK BOXES IMPOSSIBLE TO RECOVER BEFORE 12 DAYS: INVESTIGATORS

News / Airlines



Investigators into EgyptAir's plane crash need at least 12 days to recover its black boxes as they await a ship that can retrieve them from the bottom of the Mediterranean, investigation sources say.

Key points:

- **'Good chance' black boxes recovered in 12 days**
- **Black boxes are at a depth of about 3,000 metres**
- **No theory is currently favoured as the official cause of the crash**

The Airbus A320 plane crashed into the Mediterranean with 66 people on board during a May 19 flight from Paris to Cairo, after disappearing from radar screens.

Investigators are in a race against time to find the flight recorders, known as the black boxes, which have enough battery power to emit signals for four or five weeks.

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Egypt and France have signed agreements with two French companies specialising in deep water searches, Alseamar and Deep Ocean Search (DOS).

"Those two companies have complementary roles: the first is for locating the pings of the black boxes [the signal being emitted by the black boxes' beacon], while the second is for diving and recovering them" with the help of a robot, a source close to the investigation said from Cairo, requesting anonymity.

"But the DOS specialised ship left the Irish sea Saturday and it will reach the perceived crash site only in around 12 days, after having the Egyptian and French investigators embark in Alexandria."

The investigators are searching for the black boxes at a depth of around 3,000 metres, some 290 kilometres north of the Egyptian coast.

'Good chance of recovering black boxes': investigators

Three of Alseamar's DETECTOR-6000 acoustic detection systems, which submerged can detect pings for up to 4,000 to 5,000 metres below sea level, have left the French island of Corsica to the crash site on Thursday onboard Laplace, a French navy ship.

It will arrive at the perceived crash site "Sunday, or Monday at the latest," according to one of the sources.

"While we are waiting for the DOS ship, equipped for detecting the pings in deep waters, but more importantly the robots capable of descending up to 6,000 metres to recover the black boxes, we will not be wasting time as Laplace will be trying to locate them in the meantime," said one of the investigation sources.

They added that after 12 days, "there is a very good chance of recovering the flight recordings thanks to the combination of these two French companies."

The recordings could help investigators determine the reason for the crash.

The plane was carrying passengers from different nationalities, including Egyptians, French, and one dual Australian-UK national

Egypt's Aviation Minister had initially said a terrorist attack was most likely to have brought down the plane, but a technical failure is also likely.

France's aviation safety agency has said the aircraft transmitted automated messages indicating smoke in the cabin and a fault in the flight control unit minutes before losing contact.

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