PAKISTAN GROUNDS ALL ITS ATR PLANES AFTER FATAL CRASH

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Pakistan’s national carrier Monday grounded all of its 10 ATR turboprop planes after a crash last week killed 47 people and a second aircraft reported technical issues shortly before it was supposed to take off overnight.

Pakistan International Airlines flight 661 smashed into a hillside in the country’s north while travelling from the city of Chitral to the capital Islamabad last Wednesday. The airline has said one of the plane’s two turboprop engines failed.

Another PIA ATR faced "technical issues" on Sunday just before it was set to take off from the central city of Multan on a flight to southern Karachi and was called back to its parking bay. The airline denied media reports that one of the engines caught fire.

The fleet would now undergo thorough testing after the two incidents, the airline said.

"In view of Civil Aviation Authority’s decision of holding shakedown tests of PIA’s entire ATR fleet, it has been decided to keep all 10 ATR aircraft grounded till they are cleared after thorough examination," PIA spokesman Danyal Gilani said.

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ATR is a joint venture between Airbus Group and Italian aerospace company Leonardo. It competes for turboprop sales with Canada’s Bombardier.

Most of the ATR planes used by PIA were for short-haul flights.

PIA, a loss-making state carrier, has been defending the ATR plane’s safety record.

"It defies common sense that pilots and engineers would fly an aircraft that does not meet safety standards, and risk their own lives," the airline said on Friday.

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