Man Attempts to Hijack Plane, Divert to Sochi

By Jennifer Monaghan

February 09, 2014

The Pegasus airplane landed safely, despite the attempted hijacking. **SJByles**

A passenger on a plane bound for Turkey attempted to hijack the aircraft and divert it to Sochi just as the opening ceremony for the Winter Olympics got underway.

The man, a citizen of Ukraine, rose from his seat and attempted to enter the cockpit, shouting "Fly to Sochi," and threatening to set off a bomb, Ukraine's Security Service said.

News agency Interfax described the man as being in a severe state of intoxication though Istanbul governor Huseyin Avni Mutlu did not confirm he was drunk and referred to an unspecified substance that would have helped the man stay alert.

Mutlu said the man was tricked by the aircraft crew who made him think they were heading to Sochi, but then landed the plane in Istanbul instead, The Associated Press reported.

The flight from the Ukrainian city Kharkov was intercepted by a Turkish F-16 fighter jet and

landed safely at Sabiha Gokcen Airport in Istanbul with 110 passengers on board.

No weapons or explosives were found after landing, Mutlu said.

The news of the attempted hijacking broke as athletes from a record 88 different countries were parading into the Fisht Olympic Stadium.

The man was detained upon arrival in Istanbul, with Ukrainian Transport Prosecutors as yet undecided on what the criminal charges will be.

"In any case, this man will be made to answer for his acts of hooliganism," the Ukrainian security service said.

Concerns over security have been raised by several countries in the run-up to the Sochi Games, given the venue's close proximity to the restive North Caucasus region and a twin bomb attack in Volgograd, 700 kilometers away from Sochi, in December which killed at least 34 people.

On Friday, the U.S. announced it was temporarily banning liquids from carry-on hand-luggage on all planes bound for Russia, after warning that terrorists may try to smuggle explosives in toothpaste tubes.

Russia already banned carry-on liquids on all flights in January, ahead of the Sochi Games.

Contact the author at j.monaghan@imedia.ru