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Russian Military Plane Crashes in Black Sea en Route to Syria, 92 Dead

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The Russian military Tu-154 jet, registration RA-85572, believed to have been involved in the incident
Livejournal/antonio-d50

A Tu-154 passenger aircraft belonging to the Russian Defense Ministry has crashed in the Black Sea near Sochi, a source in the ministry confirmed to the Interfax news agency.

All 92 people on board, including 8 crew, are presumed dead. The plane, en route to Syria, was carrying military personnel, journalists and musicians due to perform at a New Year's concert for servicemen at the Hmeymim miltary base. It had taken off from the Chalovsky military airport in Moscow at 1.30am local time, and stopped to refuel at Sochi-Adler airport.

Among the passengers confirmed to be on the plane was the prominent philanthropist and charity worker Elizaveta Glinka, also known as Doctor Liza. 64 members of the Alexandrov Ensemble, also known as the Red Army Choir, were on board.

NTV journalist Evgeny Tolstov posted a photo on Facebook before boarding the plane.

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No explanation for the incident has so far emerged. The weather conditions around the crash site were reportedly favorable, and no technical faults were revealed during the pre-flight check. One of Interfax's sources suggested that the crash could be caused by a bird sucked into the plane's engine. Russian news outlets later reported that a version of terrorism had not been ruled out by investigators.

According to the Kommersant newspaper, the plane was built in 1983 and had two months ago undergone planned maintenance.

Russian emergency services are currently recovering bodies and debris from the crash site near Sochi.

This story will be updated as new details emerge.

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