

Saudi Football Team Land Safely in Rostov-on-Don After Apparent Engine Fire

By [Reuters](#)

June 19, 2018



Kai Pfaffenbach / Reuters

Saudi Arabia's national football team landed safely in Rostov-on-Don, Russia on Monday evening, after an apparent engine fire on the plane carrying the players to a World Cup match.

Russia's aviation watchdog Rosaviatsya said that during the landing there was a brief fire on one of the engines and that it would investigate the incident, Interfax reported. Social and Saudi media footage also appeared to show one of the engines catching fire, but a spokesman for airline Rossiya denied a fire had occurred and said the fault was due to a bird strike.

Related article: [Russia Should Follow the Saudi Lead \(Op-ed\)](#)

The team were travelling on a Rossiya Airbus A319 from St Petersburg to Rostov-on-Don,

where they are due to play their second Group A match against Uruguay on Wednesday.

As it came in to land, the plane "suffered a technical fault with one of its engines, with a bird getting caught seen as the preliminary cause," a Rossiya airlines spokesman said in a statement.

Reports of a fire in one of the engines were incorrect, the spokesman added.

"Nothing threatened the safety of the passengers. The aircraft's landing took place in a routine fashion. No warning was sounded during the landing."

Videos shared on social media showed an aircraft that posters identified as the Saudi team's plane with its wing on fire while it was in the air.

Related article: [Russian Plane Loses Gold Bars Worth \\$378 M After Door Breaks](#)

The footage, which Reuters was unable to verify independently, was shared by civil aviation monitoring website Airlive.net, which said the fire broke out on the approach to Rostov airport.

A video on the social media account of Saudi local paper Al Yaum showed flames issuing from under the plane's starboard wing against the dark backdrop of the sky, with the wing glowing bright orange.

A photograph shared by state-owned Saudi television channel al-Ekhbariya, also taken from inside the plane, showed a flame shooting out from under the wing just as it was touching down on the landing strip.

Frightened, Of Course

The Saudi federation released photographs of the players smiling and looking calm as they boarded a bus for the Mercure Hotel in central Rostov.

"All the Saudi national team players are safe, after a technical failure in one of the airplane engines ... and now they're heading to their residence safely," it said in a statement on Twitter.

Related article: [The Sorry State of Russian Aviation Safety](#)

The team, who are making their first appearance at the World Cup since 2006, suffered the biggest defeat in the tournament so far when they were thrashed 5-0 by hosts Russia in the opening game in Moscow on Thursday.

"I want to reassure you that we got to Rostov safely, it was a simple technical fault in the airplane but thank God we are now in the hotel and things are good," Osama Hawsawi, captain of the Saudi team, said in a video shared on social media.

"The whole delegation is well," midfielder Hattan Bahebri said in a video shared on the

team's official Twitter page.

"Of course, we were a bit frightened, but thank God," he added, laughing.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2018/06/19/saudi-football-team-land-safely-in-rostov-on-don-after-apparent-engine-fire-a61888>