The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Azerbaijan Demands Russia Admit to Firing on Plane Before Crash

By AFP

December 30, 2024



Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev. **VYACHESLAV OSELEDKO / AFP**

Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev on Sunday demanded that Russia admit it fired at an Azerbaijan Airlines passenger jet before it crashed last week, accusing Moscow of initially trying to cover up the cause of the deadly accident.

Aliyev made the accusation during an interview with state media four days after the AZAL Embraer 190 plane crashed in western Kazakhstan, killing 38 of the 67 people on board.

Azerbaijani officials have said a Russian surface-to-air missile likely hit the aircraft as it tried to land at Grozny airport in the republic of Chechnya.

On Sunday, Kazakhstan's transportation ministry said that the airplane's black box would be sent for analysis to Brazil, which manufactures the Embraer plane.

Related article: Azerbaijan Airlines Suspends Flights to Russia Following Deadly Crash

Aliyev's unusually forthright accusation of his country's traditional ally came a day after he spoke by telephone to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

A Kremlin statement about the phone call did not indicate that Putin had claimed responsibility for the crash.

"The facts are that the Azerbaijani civilian plane was damaged from the outside over Russian territory, near the city of Grozny, and almost lost control," Aliyev told state television.

"We also know that electronic warfare systems put our plane out of control... At the same time, as a result of fire from the ground, the tail of the plane was also severely damaged," he said.

Likewise, Aliyev said it was "regrettable and surprising" that the Russian authorities "put forward theories" that "clearly showed the Russian side wanted to cover up the issue."

"For the first three days, we heard nothing from Russia except some absurd theories," he said, adding that these included the plane hitting a flock of birds.

Aliyev said the claim was "completely detached" from reality, pointing out that the plane's "fuselage is riddled with holes."

Russia's authorities said last week that Grozny was under attack from Ukrainian drones the morning the Azerbaijani Airlines plane tried to land at the airport there.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2024/12/30/azerbaijan-demands-russia-admit-to-firing-on-plane-before-crash-a87478