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Singapore and Australia close their skies to Boeing 737 Max after crash in Ethiopia

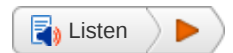
World | AFP | Tue, Mar 12, 2019



Singapore and Australia have decided to close their airspace to the Boeing 737 Max after two fatal accidents in less than six months involving this new generation of aircraft, while the United States have requested urgent changes to the manufacturer.

An Ethiopian Airlines 737 MAX 8 crashed Sunday south-east of Addis Ababa shortly after take-off, killing 157 passengers and crew members. According to a witness, Tegegn Dechasa, the rear of "the plane was already on fire when it crashed to the ground" and the aircraft left only a pile of debris.

This is another example of this model operated by Lion Air that crashed at sea in



Citing the necessary checks on the reliability of this range, the civil aviation regulator of the city-state, a major hub of air transport in Asia, temporarily suspended the operations of "all variants of Boeing 737 MAX aircraft" in its airspace.

Australian civil aviation has also banned the full range of Boeing 737 MAXs in its "immediate" airspace.

South Korea limited the immobilization to two Boeing 737 Max 8s operated by Eastar Jet.

On Monday, the United States had decided not to ground these planes, but wanted to force Boeing to make changes to the 737 MAX 8 and 737 MAX 9.

Debris collected after the crash of an Ethiopian Airlines plane on 10 March 2019, Ethiopia

The Federal Aviation Agency (FAA) has asked the American aircraft manufacturer to make changes "at the latest in April" on software and control system MCAS designed to prevent stalls.

The US authorities are distinguished from Australia, Singapore, South Korea, Indonesia, Mongolia, and especially China, a big customer of the 737 MAX 8, who decided to immobilize these devices .

In India, the authorities imposed additional safety measures on ground maintenance crews and aircraft crews.

Excavators search the ground after an Ethiopian Airlines plane crash near Bishoftu, 60 km southeast of Addis Ababa, 10 March 2019

On the airline side, Aerolineas Argentinas announced the "temporary suspension of commercial operation" of its five Boeing 737 MAX 8s on Tuesday. The day before, the pilots of the Argentine company had announced that they refused to fly on this device until receiving "sufficient information and guarantees".

Ethiopian Airlines also immobilized its other four Boeing 737 MAX 8s, followed by Cayman Airways (Cayman Islands), Comair (South Africa), Aeromexico (Mexico) and Gol (Brazil).



This new tragedy is a major challenge for the US automaker and has worried investors. The Boeing stock lost 5.36% on Wall Street on Monday.

"I think the impact for the industry is important, we have a new type of aircraft, which has only been in service for two years and now we have two accidents in similar circumstances," he said. Gerry Soejatman, an aviation analyst from Jakarta interviewed by AFP.

After the October accident in Indonesia, the company "Lion Air" had already said that it was considering canceling its order for 737 Max, I think other companies are starting to think about it, even if they are still far from make that decision, "he noted.

The Malaysian government has already indicated that it will re-examine the backlog of the national airline Malaysia Airlines for several Boeing 737 Max.

If the causes of this accident are not yet known, the crash of Lion Air in Indonesia had focused attention on the sensors of incidence (AOA) whose malfunction can drive the computer on board, thinking to be in stall, to put the device in dive when it should instead straighten it.

The 737 MAX 8 is Boeing's powerhouse of sales and profits. 350 aircraft, which entered service in May 2017, are currently flying.

And for the United States, "Boeing is strategic, it is a trading tool," says Michel Merluzeau, an expert at AirInsight.

At the crash site in Ethiopia, investigators from the Ethiopian Civil Aviation Agency were joined by a Boeing technical team and US investigators from civil aviation authorities.

The two black boxes - one containing the technical data of the flight and the other the recording of the discussions and alarms in the cockpit-- were found Monday.

Kenya was doubly bereaved by the crash. With 32 nationals on board, it is the country most affected by the tragedy, and Nairobi is also the regional hub of the United Nations, hard hit by the disaster.

The United Nations flag at half-mast in front of the organization's headquarters in New York, March 11, 2019

Several delegates to attend the annual United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) conference, which opened on Monday in the Kenyan capital, were on board.

The victims of the crash were of 35 different nationalities, according to provisional elements of the airline, including 32 Kenyans, 18 Canadians, 9 Ethiopians, 8 Italians, 8 Chinese, 8 Americans, 7 French, 7 British, 6 Egyptians, 5 Germans and 4 Indians.

The French and British governments have reported the deaths of nine of their nationals.



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