

Fiery plane crash kills 179 in worst airline disaster in South Korea

Iran condolences aerial mishap

International Desk

The deadliest air accident ever in South Korea killed 179 people on Sunday, when an airliner belly-landed and skidded off the end of the runway, erupting in a fireball as it slammed into a wall at Muan International Airport. Jeju Air flight 7C2216, arriving from the Thai capital Bangkok with 175 passengers and six crew on board, was attempting to land shortly after 9 a.m. (0000 GMT) at the airport in the south of the country, South Korea's Transport Ministry said, Reuters reported.

Two crew members survived and were being treated for injuries.

The deadliest air accident on South Korean soil was also the worst involving a South Korean airline in nearly three decades, according to the Transport Ministry.

The twin-engine Boeing 737-800 was seen in local media video skidding down the runway with no visible landing gear before crashing into navigation

equipment and a wall in an explosion of flames and debris.

"Only the tail part retains a little bit of shape, and the rest of (the plane) looks almost impossible to recognize," Muan fire chief Lee Jung-hyun told a press briefing. The two crew members, a man and a woman, were rescued from the tail section of the burning plane, Lee said.

Investigators are examining bird strikes and weather conditions as possible factors, Lee said. Yonhap news agency cited airport authorities as saying a bird strike may have caused the landing gear to malfunction.

Worst crash since 1997

The crash was the worst for any South Korean airline since a 1997 Korean Air crash in Guam that killed more than 200 people, according to transportation ministry data. The previous worst on South Korean soil was an Air China crash that killed 129 in 2002.

Experts said the bird strike report and the way the aircraft attempted to land raised more



Firefighters and rescue personnel work near the wreckage of a Jeju Air Boeing 737-800 series aircraft after the plane crashed and burst into flames at Muan International Airport in South Jeolla Province, South Korea, on December 29, 2024.

● JUNG YEON-JE/AFP

questions than answers.

"A bird strike is not unusual, problems with an undercarriage are not unusual," said Airline News editor Geoffrey Thomas. "Bird strikes happen far more often, but typically they don't cause the loss of an airplane by themselves."

Many victims appeared to be residents of nearby areas returning from vacation, officials said.

Jeju Air CEO Kim E-bae apologized for the accident, bowing deeply during a televised briefing.

He said the aircraft had no record of accidents and there were no early signs of malfunction.

No abnormal conditions were reported when the aircraft left Bangkok's Suvarnabhumi Air-



port, said Kerati Kijmanawat, president of Airports of Thailand.

The passengers included two Thai nationals and the rest are believed to be South Koreans, according to the transportation

ministry.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman extended Tehran's deep condolences to South Korea and Thailand, after the incident.

In a statement on Sunday, Esmaeil Baghaei conveyed Iran's

condemns and sympathy to the South Korean and Thai governments and nations, particularly to the families of the crash victims, wishing a speedy recovery for those injured in the tragic incident.

Lavrov: Iran-Russia partnership pact to boost cooperation opportunities

International Desk

Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said the signing of a new strategic agreement between Iran and Russia will create further opportunities for more cooperation between the two countries in various fields.

Lavrov in an interview with Sputnik on Sunday that the text of the "big" agreement has long been ready and agreed upon by the parties.

"The new 'big' agreement, the text of which has long been ready and agreed upon by the parties, is comprehensive, long-term and 'all-weather' in nature and in this sense does not require any adjustments," said Lavrov.

Iranian ambassador to Moscow Kazem Jalali recently said Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian will pay a visit to Russia next month to sign an agreement on a comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries. "The [Iranian] president will travel to Russia on January 17, and

during the trip the cooperation agreement between the two countries will be signed by Pezeshkian and [his Russian counterpart Vladimir] Putin," he said.

The agreement is designed to legally consolidate the unprecedented progress in bilateral relations achieved by the two countries in recent years and record their entry into the level of strategic partnership, Lavrov maintained.

"Of course, such a comprehensive document also has an international component," Lavrov added.

Among other things, he said, the agreement pays special attention to strengthening interaction in the interests of peace and security at the regional and global levels and sets forth Moscow and Tehran's desire for closer cooperation in the areas of security, defense, the fight against terrorism and extremism, and countering many other common challenges and threats.

Lavrov also said that the leader-



ship transition in Syria does not impact the mutual relationship between Iran and Russia.

Back in December, armed militant groups, led by Hay'at Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), took over Damascus and put an end to five decades of Assad family rule in Syria. Both Russia and Iran have been the main allies of the former government in Syria.

Since 2015, bilateral relations between Iran and Russia have expanded significantly in economic, political, and regional domains. Both countries wish to elevate their relationship to a strategic level and open up new opportunities for cooperation.

IRGC pounds terrorist group's bases in southeast Iran

Iran's Islamic Revolution Guards Corps (IRGC) Ground Force inflicted major losses on the so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group in the course of a counter-terrorism military campaign in the southeastern Sistan and Baluchestan Province, striking the bastions of the militant outfit.

Second Brigadier General Seyed Mohammad Hosseini, the Commander of the 110th Salman Farsi Special Operations Brigade, said on Sunday the operation has "seriously disrupted" the activities of Jaish al-Adl terrorists, Press TV reported.

According to Hosseini, the commando unit of the IRGC Ground Force alongside other operations units from different parts of the country have managed to firmly respond to Jaish al-Adl's threats during the "Martyrs of Security" campaign over the past few months.

"One of the most important achievements of the IRGC Ground Forces amid the Martyrs of Security exercise was the destruction of several terrorist cells and bases," Hosseini said. "The terrorists' safe haven, which was located deep inside the country, was detected and struck which seriously disrupted the activities of Jaish al-Adl terrorists," the senior IRGC commander noted.

"During the aforementioned exercise, some of the main elements of the terrorist group

were identified, arrested, and eliminated, thus ensuring sustainable security in sensitive regions," Hosseini said.

He also praised the desirable synergy between the tribal leaders, the IRGC Ground Forces, and local people in the fight against terrorist elements.

Sistan and Baluchestan Province, which borders Pakistan, has witnessed several terror attacks targeting both civilians and security forces over the past years.

Terrorist groups carrying out attacks against Iranian interests in the southeastern and southwestern parts of the country are believed to be linked to foreign intelligence services.

On October 26, ten members of Iran's law enforcement forces were killed in a terrorist attack in the Gohar Kuh district of Taftan County in the province.

The so-called Jaish al-Adl terrorist group claimed responsibility for the assault, which was one of the deadliest in the province in recent months.

The group has carried out numerous terrorist attacks in Iran, primarily in Sistan and Baluchestan. Its tactics include the abduction of border guards as well as targeting civilians and police stations within the province to incite chaos and disorder.

Mohammad Ali Rajabi
Cartoonist



Ongoing struggle between ...

Over the past 79 years, the answers to these questions have been shaped by the ongoing struggle between the two ideologies of interventionism and isolationism in US foreign policy. During World War II, interventionism, influenced by several key factors, ultimately triumphed.

First, the British government, struggling to prepare for war, needed US military support, especially to supply arms after the fall of Paris. Second, American Jews, given the atrocities committed by Hitler and the Nazis against their people, pushed for US involvement in the war. Third, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's personal ambitions played a significant role. At the time, there was no legal prohibition on serving more than two terms as president, and Roosevelt

was determined to prove he was the only one capable of confronting Germany. His third and fourth terms coincided with the global conflict. Alongside these catalysts, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor significantly weakened isolationist sentiment, leading to the US involvement in the war. After World War II, US interventionism, or internationalism, became more pronounced with the establishment of organizations like NATO, the United Nations, and global financial institutions.

Interventionism continued to rise in US foreign policy, reaching its peak in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, which led to two decades of endless wars. Eventually, both US foreign policy and public opinion reached a common conclusion: interventionist policies are costly and often yield limited results,

with taxpayers bearing the financial burden.

The decline of interventionism and the rise of isolationism can be traced to the 2016 election and the emergence of Donald Trump. Now, with his return to the White House, a new version of isolationism, known as the 2024 "America First" policy, will likely take center stage once again. As noted, the principle of "America First" has deep historical roots, and US political developments suggest that both interventionists and isolationists have a common red line: an attack on American soil, like Pearl Harbor or 9/11. In the current circumstances, where isolationism dominates US foreign policy, this variable is the only factor that could push isolationist policies to the periphery.

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