

EUROPE'S MAIN AIR CRASHES IN PAST 10 YEARS

2014 - July 17: UKRAINE - Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, a Boeing 777 flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, is shot down over a rebel-held area of Ukraine, killing 298 people, including 193 Dutch. Kiev and pro-Russian rebels exchange blame for the deadly attack.

2013 - November 17: RUSSIA - A Boeing 737 owned by Russian company Tatarstan crashes at Kazan airport while travelling from Moscow, killing 50 passengers and crew.

2010 - April 10: RUSSIA - A Tupolev-154 Polish air force plane crashes near the city of Smolensk, killing 96 people, including Polish president Lech Kaczynski, his wife and several other officials.

2008 - August 20: SPAIN - An MD-82 plane owned by Spanish low-cost company Spanair crashes and turns into a fireball while taking off at Madrid for the Canary Islands, killing 154 people.

2008 - September 14: RUSSIA - An Aeroflot-operated Boeing 737 crashes near Perm in the Ural mountains, killing 88 people.

2007 - November 30: TURKEY - A McDonnell Douglas 83 operated by Turkish low-cost airline Atlasjet crashes in mountains in the southwest, killing 57 passengers and crew.

2006 - May 3: RUSSIA - An Airbus 320 operated by Armenian company Armavia crashes into the Black Sea, killing 113 people.

2006 - July 9: RUSSIA - A Russian Airbus crashes while landing at Irkutsk in Siberia, killing 125 people.

2006 - August 22: UKRAINE - A Russian Tupolev belonging to Pulkovo crashes in eastern Ukraine, killing 170 people.

TRAGEDY IN FRENCH ALPS

The peak of Tete de l'Estrop 2,961 m

The Trois Eveches mountain range

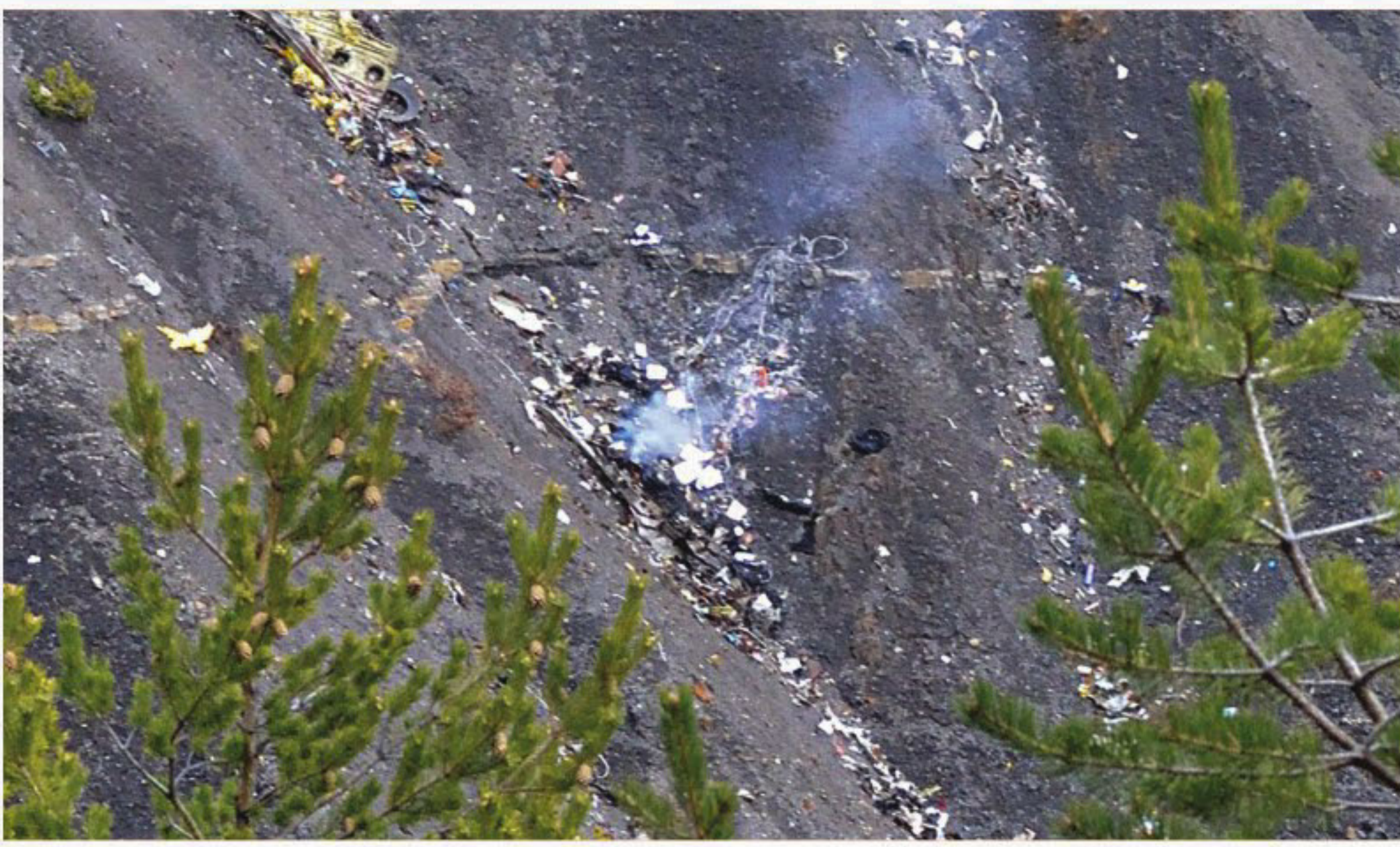
Barcelonnette

Seyne les Alpes
• Rescue HQ
• Gathering point for relatives

Airbus A320-200

- Germanwings Low-cost affiliate of Lufthansa
- 1st flight: November 1990
- Last overhaul summer 2013

150 killed Passengers	144
Germans	67
Crew	6



Top right, Debris reportedly from the Airbus A320 is seen on the mountainside. And relatives of the victims react on hearing the news. Mystery surrounds the final moments of the passenger plane after air traffic controllers claimed they received no SOS signal despite the jet nosediving 32,000ft in just eight minutes. Story on page 1.

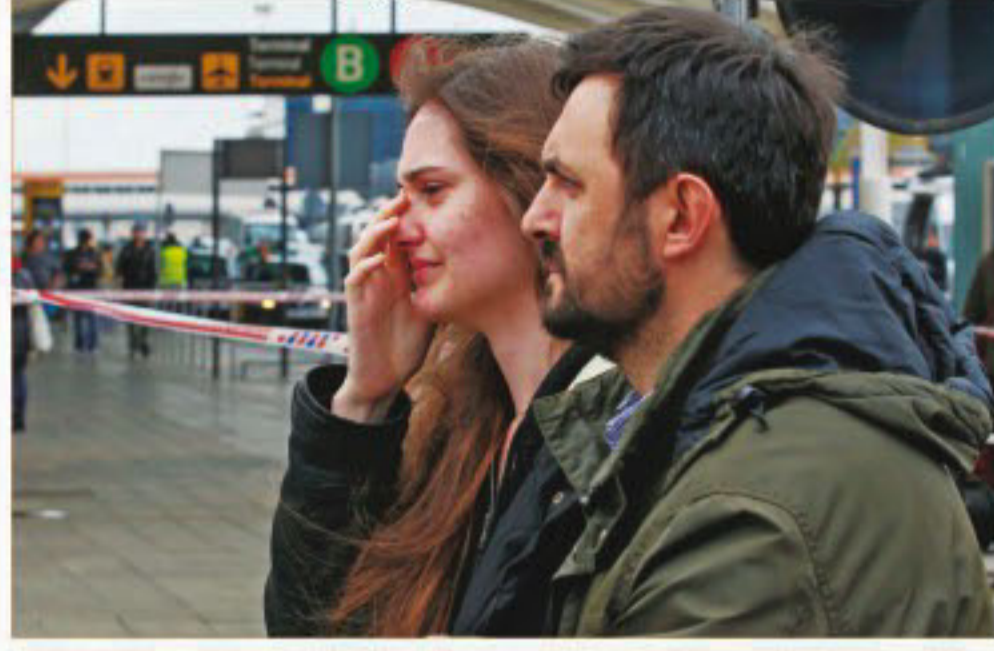


PHOTO: AFP

Israel must end occupation

Says White House; under pressure, Netanyahu apologises to Arab Israelis

AGENCIES

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday apologised for making divisive comments hurting Arab-Israelis after White House demanded that Tel Aviv end its 50-year occupation of the Palestinian territories.

In a speech on Monday, the White House chief of staff Denis McDonough called into question the Israeli government's commitment to finding a peaceful solution to the Middle East conflict.

"Israel cannot maintain military control of another people indefinitely," he told a meeting of liberal American pro-Israel lobbyists, J-Street. "An occupation that has lasted for almost 50 years must end."

McDonough, the most senior official in the US president's team, was highly critical of earlier comments made Israel's prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu in which the country's leader indicated he was not inter-

ested in working towards Palestinian sovereignty.

The White House comments are the latest salvo from the United States government in what appears to be a noticeable cooling of relations between the two countries.

The latest statement appears to be a rejection of an attempted about-face by the Israeli prime minister, who attempted to downplay his earlier comments after US criticism.

"We cannot simply pretend that those comments were never made, or that they don't raise questions about the prime minister's commitment to achieving peace through direct negotiations," McDonough said.

After Netanyahu's re-election the United States said it would "reassess" its relationship with Israel.

"Anyone who is going to establish a

Palestinian state, anyone who is going to evacuate territories today, is simply giving a base for attacks to the radical Islam against Israel," Netanyahu told Israeli news site NRG during the election campaign. He accused Israelis who believed otherwise of "sticking their head in the sand, time and time again".

Netanyahu, who is expected to be tasked this week with forming a new coalition government, yesterday tried to calm the situation but Arab-Israelis rejected it.

"I know that my statements last week offended some Israeli citizens and members of the Arab Israeli community. That was never my intention. I apologise for that," he said during a meeting with Arab Israelis broadcast on television.

Israel's occupation is illegal under international law and UN has repeatedly told the country's government to vacate Palestinian territory.

Israel spied on Iran nuke talks: report

AFP, Washington

Israel has spied on Iran's nuclear talks with the United States and other major powers, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday.

Israel quickly dismissed the report as "not true", and denied spying on the United States.

The Journal report, quoting current and former US officials, said the operation was designed to infiltrate the talks and help build a case against the emerging terms of a deal.

Besides eavesdropping, Israel obtained information from confidential US briefings, informants and diplomatic contacts in Europe, the officials told the Journal.

It added that more than the espionage, what irked the White House was the fact that Israel shared inside

information with American legislators in a bid to sap support for a deal intended to limit Iran's nuclear program.

Many Republicans are opposed to such an accord.

"It is one thing for the US and Israel to spy on each other. It is another thing for Israel to steal US secrets and play them back to US legislators to undermine US diplomacy," the Journal quoted a senior US official briefed on the matter as saying.

US intelligence agencies spying on Israel discovered the operation when they intercepted communications among Israeli officials. These communications carried details the Americans believed could only have come from access to the confidential talks, officials said, according to the Journal.



Hundreds of fake money bags representing the donations of companies in election campaigns were distributed in front of the National Congress in Brasilia, yesterday. The protest was organized by the Coalition for Political Reform, a group formed by 101 Brazilian entities including the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil, Lawyers Association of Brazil and Landless Workers' Movement.

British PM rules out 'third term'

AFP, London

British Prime Minister David Cameron's announcement that he would not seek a third term sparked heated debate on Tuesday over whether he was being laudably honest or had undermined his authority just weeks before an election.

He even went so far as to name three potential successors from within his Conservative party, risking the prospect of a leadership race that could distract from the campaign.

"There definitely comes a time when a fresh pair of eyes or fresh leadership would be good," Cameron told the BBC late Monday. "The third term is not something I'm contemplating."

His seemingly off-the-cuff remarks in an interview in the kitchen of his constituency home in Oxfordshire, west of London, were a surprise, particularly as he is by no means assured of winning a second term in the May 7 vote. The opposition Labour party accused him of arrogance.

Utah brings back firing squads

INDEPENDENT.CO.UK

Death by firing squad has returned to the US as a legal method of execution, after Utah's governor signed through a bill approving the method even as he admitted it was "a little bit gruesome".

Critics said the decision was cruel and "an embarrassment to Utah", while the local branch of the American Civil Liberties Union said it made the state "look backward and backwards".

Firing squads will only be used as a back-up when the lethal injection is not available, as Utah feels the effects of European manufacturers' refusal to export the components used in the drug.

Republican governor Gary Herbert defended the decision to make his state the only one in the US to offer the controversial method, insisting the state needed an alternative option to carry out the death penalty.

Utah remains the only state in the past 40 years to have killed someone by firing squad, though it stopped offering the method to anyone sentenced after 2004 on the grounds that the intense media interest took attention away from victims.

The last convict killed by firing squad in the US was Ronnie Lee Gardner in 2010. Sentenced for murder in Utah in 1985, his death at the hands of five police officers with rifles sparked condemnation from around the world.



WWII bomb forces London evacuation

AFP, London

Residents were evacuated from around 1,200 homes in a densely populated London neighbourhood, as bomb disposal experts worked yesterday to defuse a 1,000-pound (455-kilogramme) bomb from World War II.

The huge bomb was found by workers on a building site on Monday and an initial 100-metre security cordon set up in the area was later widened to 400 metres as an army bomb disposal team moved in.

Southwark was an industrial and commercial hub that was badly destroyed during The Blitz, a German aerial campaign on Britain between 1940 and 1941 that killed some 20,000 civilians in London alone and was intended to cripple the country into surrender.

US providing 'eye in the sky' for Iraq Tikrit op

Iraqi FM meets Assad, backs Syria's fight against 'terror'

AFP, Baghdad

The United States is providing reconnaissance support for Iraq's operation to retake Tikrit from the Islamic State group, a senior military official from the US-led anti-jihadist coalition said yesterday.

The coalition has targeted IS with air strikes and provided training and equipment to Iraqi forces, but this is the first confirmation of its direct involvement in the Tikrit operation, the largest Baghdad has launched against the jihadists.

"The coalition began providing ISR (intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance) support on March 21, 2015 at the request of the government of Iraq, and the US is now providing that support," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity.

The official added that this support is in the form of "an eye in the sky".

The ground operation involving thousands of Iraqi soldiers, police and allied paramilitaries began on March 2. It has succeeded in retaking towns leading to Tikrit, and also in surrounding several hundred jihadists in the city.

But capturing Tikrit itself has proved more difficult because of the jihadists' extensive defensive works including a huge number of bombs planted in streets and buildings.

Iraq's interior minister announced last week that the operation had been halted temporarily to avoid casualties and protect infrastructure in the city.

Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim al-Jaafari yesterday met President Bashar al-Assad in the first visit by a senior Baghdad official since Syria's conflict began in 2011.

Speaking after meeting Assad and his Syrian counterpart Walid Mualllem, Jaafari urged regional support for Damascus as it battles "terrorism".

"Arab countries should support Syria in its fight against terrorism," Jaafari said, calling on "neighbouring countries to stand with Iraq and Syria".

He said extremism "would reach all the countries if there is no cooperation".

Canada to expand air strikes on ISIS

BBC ONLINE

Canada will extend its air strike campaign against Islamic State (IS) into Syria, Prime Minister Stephen Harper has announced.

"In our view, ISIL [IS] must cease to have any safe haven in Syria," Harper said in the House of Commons.

Canada's mission against ISIS will also be extended for one year, beyond October's election and well into 2016.

Opposition leaders have criticised Harper for drawing Canada into a war with unclear objectives.

The move means Canada will be the first Nato country, other than the United States, to strike inside Syria.

ISIS controls vast swath of land on both sides of the Iraq-Syria border.

Hitler watercolor to go under hammer in US



AFP, Los Angeles

A still-life watercolor painting of flowers by a young Adolf Hitler will be sold at auction in Los Angeles this week, organizers announced Monday.

The 1912 canvas, painted by the Nazi-leader-to-be when he was a struggling artist in his mid-20s, is going under the hammer at the Nate D. Sanders auction house tomorrow.

The 13.5- by 10.75-inch (34.3- by 27.3-cm) painting shows a blue ceramic pitcher holding orange, red and soft pink flowers -- an unusual subject at a time when Hitler was

focusing more on landscapes and architecture.

Bidding for the canvas will start at \$30,000.

Hitler moved to Vienna as a young man to try to make it as an artist. Ironically, a Jewish art dealer believed in his talent and sold several Hitler paintings to wealthy Viennese Jewish clients beginning in 1911.

When the anti-Semitic Nazi leader swept to power in the 1930s his forces seized Morgenstern's gallery and he was deported to the Lodz Ghetto, where he died in 1943, according to the Los Angeles auction house.