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Airbus Investigators Join Probe Into Libyan Air Crash (Update 1)

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By Alaa Shahine and Steve Rothwell

May 13 (Bloomberg) -- **Airbus SAS** accident investigators arrived in Libya to help probe yesterday's crash of an A330 aircraft that killed all but one of the 104 people on board.

The five experts will visit the scene of the impact in Tripoli and examine the plane's "black-box" voice and flight- data recorders, which have been recovered from the wreckage, Airbus spokesman **Stefan Schaffrath** said today in an interview.

The **Afriqiyah Airways** jetliner came down short of the runway at about 6 a.m. yesterday while making its final approach following a flight from Johannesburg. Schaffrath said it's too early to say what caused the accident, the second involving an A330-200 in 12 months after an Air France plane crashed in June.

"The weather was basically good and the airport has a long runway with which the pilots were familiar, so it's not clear what went wrong," said **David Learmount**, a former U.K. Royal Air Force pilot and air-safety editor at Flight International. "It seems likely that human factors were involved, but whether there were also technical issues we just don't know yet."

The twin-engine plane was carrying 93 passengers. Of those identified so far, 59 were Dutch, seven South African, two Libyan, two British, two Austrian, one French, one German and one Zimbabwean, Afriqiyah Airways said on its [website](#).

Seventeen victims have not yet been far unidentified. Libyan Transportation Minister Mohamed Zeidan said yesterday that passengers also came from Finland and the Philippines, according to the official JANA news agency. Afriqiyah Flight 771 was also carrying 11 Libyan crew members.

Sole Survivor

The sole survivor of the crash is a Dutch boy who is being treated for fractures at a hospital in Tripoli, Dutch Foreign Affairs minister **Maxime Verhagen** said yesterday.

In addition to Libyan officials and the Airbus contingent, forensics experts and investigators from the U.S., South Africa and the Netherlands are attending, JANA reported, citing Zeidan.

The wide-body **Airbus**, powered by engines from **General Electric Co.**, first flew only on Aug. 12 last year and was delivered new to Afriqiyah Airways on Sept. 8, according to U.K. aviation consultants Ascend Worldwide Ltd.

"There are investigations going on and we are fully supportive to these investigations," Airbus spokesman Schaffrath said. "Since we built the plane we are experts at assessing the debris and evaluating the flight data."

Air France Crash

An Air France A330 crashed into the Atlantic on June 1 while en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, killing all 228 people on board. While more than 1,000 pieces of debris and 50 bodies have been pulled from the sea, no definitive reason has been found for the accident, with early studies suggesting the plane flew into poor weather with speed sensors that weren't properly functioning. The black boxes haven't been recovered.

Prior to the Air France incident the A330 had never had a fatal crash in commercial flight, though a development model came down after takeoff during testing, according to **Paul Hayes**, safety director at U.K. aviation consultants Ascend Worldwide Ltd., who says there are 650 of the jetliners in operation.

Among recent crashes on landing, the Libyan accident may have most in common with that of a Turkish Airlines Boeing Co. 737 near Amsterdam on Feb. 25, 2009, Flight's Learmount said.

The plane came down short of Schiphol airport, killing nine people of the 134 people on board, because of a known fault with the model's altitude-measuring



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system that could have been rectified by the pilots, Dutch investigators said on May 6.

'Technical Anomaly'

"There is the possibility that the Afriqiyah Airways crew were distracted by something that came up, some sort of technical anomaly, and they lost control of the aircraft," Learmount said. "That happens quite frequently."

The crash-landing of a British Airways Plc Boeing 777 at London Heathrow in 2008 was also caused by technical failure, with frozen fuel lines stopping the aircraft's engines from providing sufficient thrust on its final approach. In that case the pilots responded well, Learmount said, altering the flap settings to reduce drag and clear antennas fringing the runway.

The aircraft cracked a wing and its wheels were ripped off, but no one died.

Afriqiyah, which was founded in 2001 and serves cities in Africa, Asia and Europe, had an 11-strong Airbus fleet before the crash, including two more A330s.

To contact the reporters on this story: [Alaa Shahine](#) in Cairo at asalha@bloomberg.net; [Steve Rothwell](#) in London at srothwell@bloomberg.net

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