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Child Rescued After Crash of Yemeni Jet

By [NICOLA CLARK](#)

PARIS — Teams searching the Indian Ocean after the crash early Tuesday of a Yemeni passenger jet rescued a girl who appeared to be the sole survivor of the 153 people on board, airline officials reported.

European air safety authorities said the jet, which went down 12 miles off the island nation of Comoros, had been found to have “faults” in a 2007 inspection.

The plane, Yemenia Flight 626, was carrying 142 passengers and 11 crew members from the Yemeni capital, Sana, to Moroni, on the main Comoran island, Njazidja. The flight originated in Paris and stopped in Marseille before continuing to Yemen, where passengers and the crew switched planes to an [Airbus A310-300](#).

The survivor was identified as Bakari Baya, a 14-year-old from Marseille who was traveling with her mother, Agence France-Presse reported. A Red Cross spokeswoman said no other survivors had been found.

Bakari was being treated at a Comoros hospital, where a doctor said she was conscious and speaking but still cold from the water. Otherwise, he did not elaborate on her condition.

A policeman identified as one of the girl’s rescuers told a French radio station that the girl was seen swimming in choppy waters in the middle of bodies and plane debris around 4 a.m., the news agency reported.

“We tried to throw a life buoy,” the officer said. “She could not grab it. I had to jump in the water to get her.”

A majority of the passengers were from Comoros, returning home from Paris, the deputy chief of Yemen’s civil aviation authority, Mohammed Abdul Qader, said in Sana. The French Foreign Ministry said 66 passengers were French.

Hajji Mohamed Ali, the director of Prince Said Ibrahim International Airport at Moroni, told French radio that the plane lost radio contact with air traffic controllers five minutes before the crash. It was on its final descent in heavy winds, the Yemeni authorities said.

The Yemeni authorities said at least five bodies and some debris had been recovered.

The French transportation minister, Dominique Bussereau, said the plane that crashed had previous technical problems. The “A310 in question was inspected in 2007 by the D.G.A.C., and they noticed a certain number of faults,” he said, referring to the French civil aviation authority.

The plane had not returned to France since that inspection, Mr. Bussereau said, adding that Yemenia officials were to be interviewed “shortly” by a [European Union](#) committee that has the power to ban airlines from European skies.

The accident was the second major crash involving an Airbus jet in a month. On June 1, an Air France A330 en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris crashed in the Atlantic, killing all 228 people aboard. A French investigation agency was expected to publish its preliminary report on that accident on Thursday.

Aviation industry analysts noted that the two Airbus models involved in the accidents were a generation apart in age and flight systems, making it unlikely that there could be a technical link between the cases. But they nonetheless acknowledged the blow they represented to the image of Airbus, which builds half of the world's large commercial planes.

"It doesn't do a manufacturer any good to have an association with problems at either end of the age spectrum of their aircraft," said Doug McVitie, managing director of Arran Aerospace in Dinan, France.

The European Union is due to publish its latest quarterly list of banned airlines this month. Antonio Tajani, the union's transport commissioner, said in Brussels on Tuesday that Yemenia was not on an airline blacklist but that European safety officials would be contacting the airline for more details about the safety record of the plane that crashed.

Eric Héraud, a spokesman for the French air safety regulator, declined to comment further on the agency's 2007 inspection of the Yemenia plane, saying the details would be provided to the investigators. Khaled Ibrahim al-Wazeer, Yemen's transportation minister, told Reuters that the plane had undergone a thorough inspection in May under supervision of experts from Airbus.

The crash was the first fatal accident for Yemenia, according to Ascend, a London-based aviation consulting firm. The carrier was founded in 1961.

Sharon Otterman contributed reporting from New York.

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