

# *Russian Aviation Official Says Crashed Russian Aircraft Fell Apart in Midair*

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Cairo, November 2 (RHC)-- The Russian aircraft that recently crashed in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula broke up in the air before going down, the executive director of Russia's Interstate Aviation Commission says.

"The destruction [of the plane] happened in the air and the fragments scattered over a large area (around 20 square kilometers)," Victor Sorochenko said over the weekend. He emphasized, however, that it was "too early to draw conclusions" about what caused the aerial crash.

Sorochenko made the remarks in the Egyptian capital, Cairo, where he is leading an international panel of experts from Russia, Egypt, France and Ireland. The deadly accident took place on Saturday, when an Airbus A-321, operated by the Kogalymavia airline went down while en route from the Egyptian city of Sharm el-Sheikh to St Petersburg in Russia. It was carrying 214 Russian and three Ukrainian passengers, along with seven crew members.

Meanwhile, the black boxes of the aircraft have already been found and their contents are being analyzed to determine the cause of the aerial accident.

In another development, Russian Transport Minister Maxim Sokolov along with a team has arrived in Cairo to help Egypt with the probe. Russian media reports said the minister would soon visit the scene of the wreckage in the remote Egyptian region.

Rescuers have widened their search for more victims of the Russian passenger plane, which crashed in a mountainous area of the remote Peninsula. An Egyptian military officer helping with the search told AFP news agency on condition of anonymity that rescuers widened the search perimeter to 15 kilometers away from the site of the main wreckage. The decision was made after some bodies were found scattered for kilometers across the region.

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