

Wreckage of missing airliner found in Namibia, 34 killed

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USPA News - The wreckage of a passenger plane that disappeared from radar while flying from Mozambique to Angola was found Saturday in a game park in northeastern Namibia, but none of the 34 people on board survived, making it the country's worst aviation disaster in more than four decades. Rescue workers discovered the wreckage on Saturday morning in a remote area of Bwabwata National Park, which is sandwiched between Botswana and Angola.

"We located the wreckage this morning but the plane was completely destroyed and burned. We have recovered bodies and airlifted them to Rundu," a Namibian police official said. LAM Mozambique Airlines flight TM 470 had departed from the international airport in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique, at 11:26 a.m. local time on Friday and was expected to land in the Angolan capital of Luanda at 2:10 p.m. local time. But contact with the flight, an Embraer 190 aircraft, was lost when it was near Rundu, a town that serves as the capital of the Kavango region in northern Namibia. The airline said flight TM 470 was carrying 28 passengers and six crew members, including two pilots, three cabin attendants and a technician. The passengers were identified as ten Mozambican citizens, nine Angolan citizens, five Portuguese citizens, and one passenger each from France, China, and Brazil. Mozambique Airlines did not disclose the nationality of the 28th passenger, but Portuguese President Aníbal Cavaco Silva said a sixth Portuguese citizen was also on board. "Diplomatic and consular services have been in contact with their families and the authorities of the countries involved," he said, expressing his "deep regret" and sympathy. The airline said it opened family assistance centers at the airports in Maputo and Luanda, and added that it had sent a response team to Namibia to assist investigators. "We do not have any information on the circumstances of the accident and we cannot speculate on possible causes as the investigators must be given the time and space to do their work without interference or prejudice," the airline said. Friday's crash was Namibia's worst aviation disaster in more than four decades. The only other aircraft crash involving mass casualties happened in April 1968 when South African Airways flight 228 crashed shortly after takeoff from Hosea Kutako International Airport in Windhoek, the country's capital. Mozambique Airlines, along with all other air carriers that have been certified in Mozambique, is banned from operating in the European Union (EU). The country was added to the union's list of banned airliners in April 2011, with EU officials saying the civil aviation authorities in the African country are facing "significant deficiencies." Since it commenced operations in December 1937, Mozambique Airlines experienced only one fatal accident, which happened at Maputo's airport in March 1970 and resulted in the deaths of three people. The most recent incident happened in October 1998 when a South African Airways aircraft leased by Mozambique Airlines caught fire after taking off from Maputo, but the plane was able to carry out an emergency landing and none of the 66 people on board were killed.

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