

A Simple Guide to the Aftermath of the Ethiopian Plane Crash

By The New York Times

March 13, 2019

The deadly crash of a Boeing 737 Max 8 operated by Ethiopian Airlines has led to a virtual worldwide grounding of the plane and raised urgent questions about why a brand-new aircraft would go down minutes after takeoff.

President Trump said on Wednesday that the United States, one of the last holdouts in barring flights of the popular jet, would now do so “until further notice.” American and Canadian regulators said new satellite data showed similarities between the Ethiopian crash and another deadly one months earlier by a Max 8 operated by Lion Air in Indonesia, raising further questions about the safety of the aircraft.

The investigation into the Ethiopian crash, which killed 157 people from 35 countries, is fast-moving, and far-reaching. There are still more questions than answers, but some possible explanations are emerging.

Here’s a guide to our coverage.

What happened before the plane went down?

- The captain of the Ethiopian plane reported “flight control problems” to air traffic controllers minutes before the plane crashed near Addis Ababa, the airline said.
- Such problems generally suggest difficulties with the handling of the aircraft or the computerized flight control system, rather than other issues like a fire on board.

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES CRASH

[Live updates on the aftermath](#)

[A simple guide to the story](#)

[A map of the grounded routes](#)

[Answers to your questions](#)

What is still unknown?

- After the Lion Air crash, part of the **flight control software** known as MCAS came under scrutiny. Investigators will try to determine whether the Ethiopian Airlines flight experienced software problems. The Ethiopian airline has a tradition of high-quality training of its pilots.

[A reconstruction of the Lion Air crash from the perspective of the pilots.]

- The flight data and voice recorders have been recovered and will be sent abroad for study. If they are in good condition, the data could be read quickly. If not, the process could take weeks.

Who is still flying the planes?

- All of the 371 Max 8 planes in service worldwide now appear to be grounded. The United States grounding will affect Southwest and American, heavy users of the planes and the only United States carriers that have them.
- Boeing's chief executive, Dennis A. Muilenburg, called President Trump on Tuesday to express his confidence in the safety of the Max 8, and the Federal Aviation Administration had said until Mr. Trump's announcement on Wednesday afternoon that the planes could keep flying while it conducted its review.

What is the effect on Boeing?

- Norwegian Air, which has one of the largest Max 8 fleets outside the United States, said it would seek compensation from Boeing after European regulators grounded the aircraft.
- Boeing shares fell 6 percent on Tuesday, after dropping 5 percent on Monday. They closed up slightly on Wednesday.
- If the Ethiopian crash is linked to the **MCAS system, the consequences for Boeing could be severe.** It has already begun a costly redesign of the flight control software, an effort on which critics say Boeing has dragged its feet. It faces lawsuits from victims' families and has suffered an incalculable blow to its reputation.

