

= Germanwings Flight 9525 =

Germanwings Flight 9525 (4U9525 / GWI18G) was a scheduled international passenger flight from Barcelona ? El Prat Airport in Spain to Düsseldorf Airport in Germany . The flight was operated by Germanwings , a low @-@ cost carrier owned by the German airline Lufthansa . On 24 March 2015 , the aircraft , an Airbus A320 @-@ 211 , crashed 100 kilometres (62 mi) north @-@ west of Nice in the French Alps after a constant descent that began one minute after the last routine contact with air traffic control and shortly after it had reached its assigned cruising altitude . All 144 passengers and six crew members were killed . It was Germanwings ' first fatal crash in the 18 @-@ year history of the company .

The crash was deliberately caused by the co @-@ pilot Andreas Lubitz , who had previously been treated for suicidal tendencies and been declared " unfit to work " by a doctor . Lubitz kept this information from his employer and reported for duty . During the flight , he locked the pilot out of the cockpit before initiating a descent that caused the aircraft to crash into a mountain .

In response to the incident and the circumstances of Lubitz 's involvement in it , aviation authorities in Australia , Canada , Germany , New Zealand , Norway , and the United Kingdom implemented new regulations that require the presence of two authorized personnel in the cockpit at all times . Three days after the incident , the European Aviation Safety Agency issued a temporary recommendation for airlines to ensure at least two crew members ? including at least one pilot ? are in the cockpit during the entire duration of the flight . Several airlines announced they had already adopted similar policies voluntarily .

= = Flight = =

Germanwings Flight 9525 took off from Runway 07R at Barcelona ? El Prat Airport on 24 March 2015 at 10 : 01 a.m. CET (09 : 01 UTC) and was due to arrive at Düsseldorf Airport by 11 : 39 CET . The flight 's scheduled departure time was 9 : 35 CET . According to the French national civil aviation inquiries bureau , the Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety (BEA) , the pilots confirmed instructions from French air traffic control at 10 : 30 CET . At 10 : 31 CET , after crossing the French coast near Toulon , the aircraft left its assigned cruising altitude of 38 @,@ 000 feet (12 @,@ 000 m) and without approval began to descend rapidly . The air traffic controller declared the aircraft in distress after its descent and loss of radio contact .

The descent time from 38 @,@ 000 feet was about ten minutes ; radar observed an average descent rate of approximately 3 @,@ 400 feet per minute or 58 feet per second (18 m / s) . Attempts by French air traffic control to contact the flight on the assigned radio frequency were not answered . A French military Mirage jet was scrambled from the Orange @-@ Caritat Air Base to intercept the aircraft . According to the BEA , radar contact was lost at 10 : 40 CET ; at the time the aircraft had descended to 6 @,@ 175 feet (1 @,@ 882 m) . The aircraft crashed in the remote commune of Prads @-@ Haute @-@ Bléone , 100 kilometres (62 mi) north @-@ west of Nice .

The crash is the deadliest air disaster in France since the 1981 crash of Inex @-@ Adria Aviopromet Flight 1308 in which 180 people died , and the third @-@ deadliest in France behind Flight 1308 and Turkish Airlines Flight 981 . This was the first major crash of a civil airliner in France since the crash of Air France Flight 4590 on takeoff from Charles de Gaulle Airport in 2000 .

= = = Crash site = = =

The crash site is within the Massif des Trois @-@ Évêchés , three kilometres (2 mi) east of the settlement Le Vernet and beyond the road to the Col de Mariaud , in an area known as the Ravin du Rosé . The aircraft crashed on the southern side of the Tête du Travers , a minor peak in the lower western slopes of the Tête de l 'Estrop . The site is approximately 10 kilometres (6 mi) west of Mount Cimet , where Air France Flight 178 crashed in 1953 .

Gendarmerie nationale and Sécurité Civile sent helicopters to locate the wreckage . The aircraft had disintegrated ; the largest piece of wreckage was " the size of a car " . A helicopter landed near

the crash site ; its personnel confirmed there were no survivors . The search and rescue team reported the debris field covered two square kilometres (500 acres) .

= = Aircraft = =

The aircraft that crashed was a 24 @-@ year @-@ old Airbus A320 @-@ 211 , serial number 147 , registered as D @-@ AIPX . It first flew on 29 November 1990 . It was delivered to Lufthansa on 5 February 1991 and was leased to Germanwings from 1 June 2003 until mid @-@ 2004 . The aircraft was returned to Lufthansa on 22 July 2004 and remained with that airline until 2014 , during which time it was named Mannheim . It was finally transferred to Germanwings on 31 January 2014 .

The aircraft had accumulated about 58 @,@ 300 flight hours on 46 @,@ 700 flights . The original Design Service Goal (DSG) of the aircraft was 60 @,@ 000 hours or 48 @,@ 000 flights . In 2012 , an optional Extended Service Goal (ESG1) was approved , extending the aircraft 's service life to 120 @,@ 000 hours or 60 @,@ 000 flights , provided a required package of service and inspections was performed before the DSG was reached .

= = Crew and passengers = =

During its final flight , the aircraft was carrying 144 passengers , two pilots , and four cabin crew members from at least 18 countries ? mostly Germany and Spain . The count was confused by the multiple citizenship status of some people on board .

= = = Crew = = =

The flight 's pilot in command was 34 @-@ year @-@ old Captain Patrick Sondenheimer , who had ten years of flying experience (6 @,@ 000 flight hours) flying A320s for Germanwings , Lufthansa , and Condor . The co @-@ pilot was 27 @-@ year @-@ old First Officer Andreas Lubitz , who joined Germanwings in September 2013 and had 630 flight hours of experience .

= = = = Andreas Lubitz = = = =

Andreas Günter Lubitz was born on 18 December 1987 and grew up in Neuburg an der Donau , Bavaria and Montabaur in the German state of Rhineland @-@ Palatinate . He took flying lessons at Luftsportclub Westerwald , an aviation sports club in Montabaur .

Lubitz was accepted into a Lufthansa trainee programme after finishing high school . Starting in 2008 , he received pilot training at the Lufthansa Flight Training school in Bremen , Germany , and at the Lufthansa Airline Training Center in Goodyear , Arizona , United States . Lubitz took time off from his flight training for several months and informed the Flight Training Pilot School in 2009 of a previous episode of severe depression . He later completed the training and spent an eleven @-@ month waiting period working as a flight attendant for Lufthansa before gaining his commercial pilot 's licence .

= = = Passengers = = =

Among the passengers were sixteen students and two teachers from the Joseph @-@ König @-@ Gymnasium of Haltern am See , North Rhine @-@ Westphalia . They were returning home from a student exchange with the Giola Institute in Llinars del Vallès , Barcelona . Haltern 's mayor , Bodo Klimpel , described the crash as " the darkest day in the history of [the] town " . Bass @-@ baritone Oleg Bryjak and contralto Maria Radner , singers with Deutsche Oper am Rhein , were also on the flight .

= = Investigation = =

The French Bureau of Enquiry and Analysis for Civil Aviation Safety (BEA) opened an investigation into the crash ; it was joined by its German counterpart , the Federal Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation (BFU) , and was assisted by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) . Hours after the crash , the BEA sent seven investigators to the crash site ; these were accompanied by representatives from Airbus and CFM International . The cockpit voice recorder , which was damaged but still usable , was recovered by rescue workers and was examined by the investigation team . The following week , Marseille prosecutor Brice Robin announced that the flight data recorder , which was blackened by fire but still usable , had also been found . Investigators isolated 150 sets of DNA , which were compared with the DNA of the victims ' families .

= = = Cause of crash = = =

According to French and German prosecutors , the crash was deliberately caused by the co @-@ pilot . Brice Robin said co @-@ pilot Andreas Lubitz was initially courteous to Captain Sondenheimer during the first part of the flight , then became " curt " when the captain began the mid @-@ flight briefing on the planned landing . Robin said when the captain returned from a probable toilet break and tried to enter the cockpit , Lubitz had locked the door . The captain had a code to unlock the door , but the lock 's code panel can be disabled from the cockpit controls . The captain requested re @-@ entry using the intercom ; he knocked and then banged on the door , but received no response . The captain then tried to break down the door . During the descent , the co @-@ pilot did not respond to questions from air traffic control and did not transmit a distress call . Robin said contact from the Marseille air traffic control tower , the captain 's attempts to break in , and Lubitz 's steady breathing were audible on the cockpit voice recording . The screams of passengers in the last moments before impact were also heard on the recording .

After their initial analysis of the aircraft 's flight data recorder , the BEA concluded that Lubitz deliberately crashed the aircraft . He had set the autopilot to descend to 100 feet (30 m) and accelerated the speed of the descending aircraft several times thereafter . The aircraft was travelling at 700 kilometres per hour (430 mph) when it crashed into the mountain . The BEA preliminary report into the crash was published on 6 May 2015 , six weeks later . It confirmed the initial analysis of the aircraft 's flight data recorder and revealed that during the earlier outbound Flight 9524 from Düsseldorf to Barcelona , Lubitz had practised setting the autopilot altitude dial to 100 feet several times while the captain was out of the cockpit .

= = = Investigation of Lubitz = = =

Three days after the crash , German detectives searched Lubitz 's Montabaur properties and removed a computer and other items for testing . They did not find a suicide note nor any evidence his actions had been motivated by " a political or religious background " . During their search of Lubitz 's apartment , detectives found a letter in a waste bin indicating he had been declared unfit to work by a doctor . Germanwings stated it had not received a sick note from Lubitz for the day of the flight . News accounts said Lubitz was " hiding an illness from his employers " ; under German law , employers do not have access to employees ' medical records , and sick notes excusing a person from work do not give information about medical conditions .

The following day , authorities again searched Lubitz 's home , where they found evidence he was taking prescription drugs and suffered from a psychosomatic illness . Criminal investigators said Lubitz 's web searches on his tablet computer in the days leading up to the crash included " ways to commit suicide " and " cockpit doors and their security provisions " . Prosecutor Brice Robin said doctors had told him Lubitz should not have been flying , but " medical secrecy requirements " prevented this information from being made available to Germanwings .

In the weeks before the BEA 's preliminary report , the investigation into Lubitz found he had been treated for suicidal tendencies prior to his training as a commercial pilot and had been temporarily denied a US pilot 's license because of these treatments for depression . The final report of the BEA confirmed the preliminary report 's findings , saying the co @-@ pilot began showing symptoms of

psychotic depression . For five years , Lubitz had frequently been unable to sleep because of what he believed were vision problems ; he consulted over forty doctors and feared he was going blind . Motivated by the fear that blindness would cause him to lose his pilot 's licence , he began conducting online research about methods of committing suicide before deciding to crash Flight 9525 .

= = Aftermath = =

= = = Political = = =

French Minister of the Interior Bernard Cazeneuve announced that due to the " violence of the impact " there was " little hope " any survivors would be found . Prime Minister Manuel Valls dispatched Cazeneuve to the scene and set up a ministerial task force to coordinate the response to the incident .

German Foreign Minister Frank @-@ Walter Steinmeier flew over the crash site ; he described it as " a picture of horror " . German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the minister @-@ president of North Rhine @-@ Westphalia Hannelore Kraft travelled to the crash site the following day . Merkel , Valls , and Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy visited the recovery operations base at Seyne @-@ les @-@ Alpes . Bodo Klimpel , mayor of Haltern am See , reacting to the deaths of sixteen students and two teachers from the town , said that people were shocked by the crash .

= = = Commercial = = =

Lufthansa chief executive officer Carsten Spohr visited the crash location the day following the crash ; he said it was " the darkest day for Lufthansa in its 60 @-@ year history " . Several Germanwings flights were cancelled on 24 and 25 March due to the pilots ' grief at the loss of their colleagues . Germanwings retired the flight number 4U9525 , changing it to 4U9441 ; the outbound flight number was changed from 4U9524 to 4U9440 . In the days following the crash , Lufthansa at first said it saw no reason to change its procedures , then reversed its earlier statement by introducing a new policy across its airlines requiring the presence of two crew members in the cockpit at all times .

= = = Regulatory = = =

In response to the incident and the circumstances of Lubitz 's involvement in it , aviation authorities in Australia , Canada , Germany , New Zealand , Norway , and the UK implemented new regulations that require two authorized personnel to be present in the cockpit of large passenger aircraft at all times . While the United States Federal Aviation Administration , the Civil Aviation Administration of China , and some European airlines already had a similar " rule of two " requirement , the European Aviation Safety Agency recommended the introduction of similar legal changes . Other airlines announced similar changes to their policies .

The British Psychological Society issued a statement offering to provide expert support in psychological testing and monitoring of pilots . The European Federation of Psychologists ' Associations (EFPA) issued a statement supporting psychological testing in the selection of pilots , but also stated it could not forecast the life events and mental health problems of individual pilots , nor could it predict the unique ways pilots would cope with these . It said priority should be given to psychological help for relatives and friends of victims in the aftermath of a disaster .

In May 2015 , Lufthansa CEO Carsten Spohr proposed random checks of pilots ' psychological fitness and a loosening of the extant physician ? patient confidentiality laws . Politicians began echoing the call for a loosening of the laws in exceptional cases .

= = = Compensation = = =

Germanwings ' parent company Lufthansa offered victims ' families an initial aid payment of up to ? 50 @, @ 000 , separate from any legally @-@ required compensation for the disaster . Elmar Giemulla , a professor of aviation law at the Technical University of Berlin quoted by the Rheinische Post , said he expected the airline would pay ? 10 ? 30 million in compensation . The Montreal Convention sets a per @-@ victim cap of ? 143 @, @ 000 in the event an airline is held liable , unless negligence can be proved . Insurance specialists said although co @-@ pilot Andreas Lubitz hid a serious illness from his employer and deliberately crashed the passenger aircraft , these facts would not affect the issue of compensation nor be applicable to the exclusion clause in Lufthansa 's insurance policy . Lufthansa 's insurance company set aside US \$ 300 million (? 280 million) for financial compensation to victims ' families and for the cost of the aircraft .

German law does not allow for punitive damages or the broad discovery generally available under the law of most American jurisdictions . A U.S. plaintiffs ' law firm , Kreindler & Kreindler , signed up families of about 80 of the crash victims as clients ; and filed a lawsuit on their behalf on April 13 , 2016 in the United States District Court for the District of Arizona against the Arizona @-@ based Lufthansa Airline Training Center that Lubitz had attended for his training as a commercial pilot .

= = = Commemorative = = =

Shortly after the crash , a memorial stone in memory of the victims was erected near the crash site in Le Vernet . The following month , about 1 @, @ 400 relatives of victims , senior politicians , rescue workers , and airline employees attended a memorial service at Cologne Cathedral . The parents of Andreas Lubitz were invited to the service but did not attend .

The remains of fifteen of the sixteen school children and their two teachers arrived in their home town of Haltern for burial two months after the crash . Residents held white roses as the hearses passed the children 's school , where eighteen trees ? one for each victim ? had been planted as a memorial . In Düsseldorf on the same day , the remains of forty @-@ four of the seventy @-@ two German victims arrived for burial . Errors on the victims ' death certificates had caused a delay . A lawyer representing the families of thirty @-@ four victims said that burying the remains would help many relatives achieve closure .