

CASE STUDY

Airline Accident Family Assistance

BACKGROUND

On 24th March 2015, flight 9525, an Airbus A320-211, crashed 100 kilometres (62 miles) north-west of Nice in the French Alps. All 144 passengers and 6 crew members of 17 different nationalities were killed. Flight 9525 was a scheduled international passenger flight that had departed from Barcelona–El Prat Airport in Spain and was on route to Düsseldorf Airport in Germany.

The results of the investigation into the incident found that the crash was deliberately caused by the co-pilot. Shortly after reaching cruise altitude and while the captain was momentarily out of the cockpit, he locked the cockpit door and initiated a controlled descent that continued until the aircraft impacted a mountainside.

CHALLENGES

The scale of the incident including the number of nations involved had repercussions for how it was to be managed. The inclusion of multiple authorities, each having different interests, created a lack of cohesion and national coordination to support Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) processes. The dissemination of information to the families was also complicated by this, with reports of local Ministry representatives and civil police speaking with family groups and appearing to dissuade them from attending the Family Assistance Centres (FAC), as they did not consider it was necessary.

It was indicated that initial ante mortem data was collected at the airport by a combination of National

Police (Spanish Govt) and Mossos Desquadra (Catalan Govt Police). However, the police declined to provide names, or the extent of the ante mortem collection, and said that any information requests regarding this would have to be from the French Minister to the Minister of Madrid. This made a challenging identification process even more problematic.

Finding suitable accommodation for hundreds of family members travelling to the FAC in Marseille proved difficult, and this was exacerbated by the Easter holidays and the Cannes Film Festival that saw a high number of hotel rooms pre-booked.



SOLUTIONS

The focus for Kenyon during this incident was to provide support for the families of the 149 victims who were located all over the world. At the client's request, Family Assistance Centres were established in Marseille and Barcelona, and in conjunction with the client incident support services, coordinated the family briefings, travel and accommodation needs, mental health support, and family data collection, as well as facilitating daily site visits for a total of 262 family members across a three-week period. A family website was also activated that allowed the families access to any new release of information and answers to common questions, as well as the opportunity to watch memorial services that they were unable to travel to. The nature of the incident meant that the families needed ongoing

psycho-social care, financial and legal advice, as well as regular updates as to the status of the identification process. In order to manage this, Kenyon created the Long-Term Care Centre (LCC) for the purposes of providing the continuing assistance an incident of this scale requires. There were 42 staff members deployed during a six-week period, some of whom also helped train the client team who eventually took over the running of the LCC. Kenyon also established channels of communication with the relevant authorities and worked with them to collect ante mortem data; following identifications, Kenyon facilitated 39 cremations and subsequent repatriation of 35 urns, as well as 109 international repatriations to 12 different countries.



The Kenyon International Call Centre was activated immediately in order to manage the influx of calls from concerned family and friends. The large number of nationalities involved resulted in Kenyon providing assistance in five languages - English, Spanish, German, Italian and French. 145 agents dealt with inbound calls, data management, notifications, and travel support, and handled 3,432 inbound calls and 859 outbound calls in total, 1,200 of which occurred in the first 12 hours.

With the support of Kenyon, the client and those who lost loved ones in this tragic incident, were given the tools and information necessary to transition through one of the most difficult periods of their life.

If you would like to know more about Kenyon Emergency Services, visit kenyoninternational.com or contact kenyon@kenyoninternational.com

