Cockpit Security and the Flydubai Attack: What Might Change

Name Date Class

Reading

1 Imagine you are on a flight from Dubai to Tel Aviv. About two hours after takeoff, the plane suddenly starts to fall. That is what happened on flydubai Flight FZ1073 on September 30, 2026. The plane was flying at about 10,000 meters when it **plunged** more than 5,000 meters in about two minutes, according to flight-tracking data. There were around 180 people on board.

2 Behind the locked cockpit door, the two pilots were fighting. UAE officials say the co-pilot attacked the captain with the cockpit's emergency axe, a tool that most passenger planes carry for emergencies. Some sources say the co-pilot **allegedly** wanted to crash the plane in Israel, but by October 4 the UAE had not announced a **motive**. The captain, Smit Machchhar, was badly hurt. He later said that he lay on the floor, knew the plane was falling, and saw the door as his last chance. Somehow, he opened it.

3 Passengers and crew rushed in and **overpowered** the co-pilot. The plane leveled out, and two other pilots who were on board took the controls. They landed safely in Tabuk, Saudi Arabia. Israel's prime minister said the captain saved everyone. Experts add that, without his help, getting into a locked cockpit from outside would have been almost impossible.

4 That door is central to the debate. After the attacks of September 11, 2001, the global aviation body ICAO required stronger cockpit doors. These **reinforced** doors can resist small-arms fire, and they stay locked during flights. They were built to stop **intruders**, and they do that job well. But a locked door cannot protect pilots from someone who is already inside. In 2015, a Germanwings co-pilot locked the captain out and flew the plane into the French Alps, and all 150 people on board died.

5 After the Germanwings crash, many airlines began to use a two-person rule: two crew members must be in the cockpit at all times. Later, some regulators, including Europe's EASA, made this rule **optional**. Another question is **screening**. Passengers go through metal detectors, but crew members may get only random checks. Israel's prime minister said the co-pilot may not have been required to pass through a metal detector. However, UAE officials say the weapon was the axe that was already in the cockpit.

6 The biggest questions are about background checks. According to unnamed officials, the co-pilot was an Omani citizen who had been **flagged** as a security risk and **barred** from flying in his home country because of concerns about extremist views. Later, flydubai hired him. A Gulf diplomat said he passed standard checks, but they appear to have looked mainly for criminal **convictions**. Israel says it has agreements to keep pilots from countries without **diplomatic relations** with Israel off its flights. Oman has no formal ties to Israel, and Israel's prime minister said there was a **loophole**. In early October, neither airline had confirmed the reports in public.

7 What might change? Israel says it will **tighten** its checks on every flight into the country and check the identities of all pilots. On October 4, the prime minister ordered a review of foreign airlines' security, and flydubai paused its Tel Aviv flights. Experts suggest heavier screening for crew, more information sharing between countries, and more attention to the **insider**, someone who works for an organization and knows its weak points. One security expert disagrees: the problem may be that someone ignored the rules, not that the rules are weak. Any new rule will face the same question as the cockpit door: how do you keep danger out without also keeping help out?

Vocabulary Matching

Match each word from the reading with its meaning. Write the letter on the line.

1	**plunged**	_____	**A**	said to be true, but without proof
2	**allegedly**	_____	**B**	a gap in a rule that lets people avoid it
3	**motive**	_____	**C**	to make rules or checks stricter
4	**overpowered**	_____	**D**	marked as a possible problem
5	**reinforced**	_____	**E**	the checking of people for dangerous items
6	**intruders**	_____	**F**	a person inside a group who knows its secrets
7	**optional**	_____	**G**	made stronger with extra material
8	**screening**	_____	**H**	the reason why a person does something
9	**flagged**	_____	**I**	not required, so people can choose
10	**barred**	_____	**J**	court decisions that a person is guilty
11	**convictions**	_____	**K**	official links between two governments
12	**diplomatic relations**	_____	**L**	took control of a person by being stronger
13	**loophole**	_____	**M**	people who enter a place without permission
14	**tighten**	_____	**N**	fell very fast and a long way down
15	**insider**	_____	**O**	not allowed to do something by a rule

Fill in the Blank

Choose a word from the box to complete each sentence. Use each word once. The words are already in the correct form.

allegedly	**barred**	**convictions**	**flagged**	**insider**	**intruders**	**loophole**	**motive**	**optional**
overpowered	**plunged**	**reinforced**	**screening**	**tighten**				

1 The temperature _____ below zero last night.

2 The man _____ took the money, but a court has not decided yet.

3 The police still do not know the _____ for the crime.

4 Two guards _____ the thief and called the police.

5 The museum has a _____ door that is very hard to break.

6 The alarm rang when _____ entered the shop at night.

7 The class trip is _____ , so you do not have to come.

8 Airport _____ checks passengers and bags for dangerous items.

9 The bank _____ the payment as a possible fraud.

10 He was _____ from the club for fighting.

11 The man had two _____ for stealing cars.

12 The company used a _____ in the law to pay less tax.

13 The school plans to _____ its rules on phones.

14 An _____ told the newspaper about the secret plan.

Comprehension Questions

Answer in your notebook or discuss with a partner. Questions 10 to 12 are IELTS-style.

1 Where was flydubai Flight FZ1073 going, and what happened about two hours after takeoff?

2 What do UAE officials say the co-pilot used to attack the captain?

3 What did the captain do even though he was badly hurt, and why was it so important?

4 Who stopped the attack, and who landed the plane?

5 Why did the world's aviation body require stronger cockpit doors after September 11, 2001?

6 How did the Germanwings case in 2015 show a problem with locked cockpit doors?

7 The reading raises two questions about rules: one about screening and one about background checks. Explain each one in your own words.

8 What changes might happen after the attack? Name two from the reading.

9 Should crew members go through the same screening as passengers? Give two reasons.

IELTS-Style Questions

10 **True, False, or Not Given:** *"Flydubai has confirmed that the co-pilot was flagged as a risk before it hired him."* Explain your answer using evidence from the reading.

11 **Yes, No, or Not Given:** *"The writer believes that locked cockpit doors were a mistake."* Explain your answer using evidence from the reading.

12 **Author's purpose:** Why does the writer end with a question about keeping danger out without keeping help out? Is the aim to give a final answer, to show a problem that is still hard to solve, or to blame one organization?

True or False

Circle T (true) or F (false) according to the reading. Write a correction for each false statement on the dotted line.

1 **T / F** The plane fell more than 5,000 meters in about two minutes.

2 **T / F** The flight was going from Tel Aviv to Dubai.

3 **T / F** UAE officials say the co-pilot used a knife from a passenger's bag.

4 **T / F** Two other pilots on board landed the plane.

5 **T / F** The plane landed in Israel.

6 **T / F** Reinforced cockpit doors were required after the attacks of September 11, 2001.

7 **T / F** The Germanwings crash happened in 2005.

8 **T / F** Some regulators have made the two-person rule optional.

9 **T / F** Oman and Israel have no formal diplomatic relations.

10 **T / F** Israel says it lets pilots from every country fly its routes.

Discussion Questions

Talk with a partner or in a small group. The questions move from personal to more abstract.

1 Do you enjoy flying? What do you like or dislike about being on a plane?

2 What is the longest flight you have taken? What did you do to pass the time?

3 Do airport security checks bother you, or do they make you feel safer?

4 Imagine you were a passenger on flight FZ1073. What do you think you would do?

5 Passengers and crew helped to stop the attack. What qualities do people need in an emergency?

6 Some people stay calm in a crisis, and others do not. What do you think makes the difference?

7 After 2001, many countries made cockpit doors stronger, and that solved one problem but created another. Can you think of another rule that did something similar?

8 In many places, pilots are not screened in exactly the same way as passengers. Should they be? Why or why not?

9 A two-person rule can make flights a little safer, but it also makes work harder for airlines. How would you decide whether it is worth it?

10 An airline wants to check a pilot's background before hiring. What should it be allowed to ask, and what should stay private?

11 A warning about a person in one country does not always reach other countries. What kinds of information should be shared across borders, and who should decide?

12 In the days after a news event like this one, officials and experts often disagree. Whom do you trust for information while the facts are still coming out, and why?

13 One expert in the reading says the rules may be fine and that someone may have ignored them. Another says the rules need to change. How would you test who is right?

14 How safe is safe enough? Should a society accept a very small risk to keep travel cheap and easy?

Language Focus: Past Simple and Past Continuous

Use the past simple for finished actions, often one after another: the plane plunged, passengers rushed in. Use the past continuous (was or were + verb with -ing) for an action that was in progress at a moment in the past. It often gives the background to another event.

In the reading:

- "The plane **was flying** at about 10,000 meters when it **plunged** more than 5,000 meters in about two minutes…"
- "Behind the locked cockpit door, the two pilots **were fighting**."
- "…knew the plane **was falling**, and saw the door as his last chance."

Practice: Complete the sentence with the past simple or the past continuous: *Last night I (watch) the news when my phone (ring).*

Activities and speed challenge
englishbridges.com/lessons/flydubai-cockpit-security

Notes