



Singapore Airlines Flight SQ-321

Extreme inflight turbulence over the Irrawaddy Basin in Myanmar, 21 May 2024

Singapore Airlines flight SQ321, a Boeing 777-312ER, operating a scheduled passenger flight from London-Heathrow to Singapore Changi Airport carrying 211 passengers and 18 crew, experienced severe and extreme turbulence over Myanmar resulting in one death and 104 injuries. The pilot declared a medical emergency and diverted to carry out an emergency landing at Suvarnabhumi Airport in Bangkok at 15:45 local time.

Over the last 15 years, our Aviation team has recovered more than USD \$500 million for injured passengers and bereaved families of aviation accidents worldwide, including more than USD \$140 million following Asian air accidents, more than any other aviation team in the UK or Europe. This free confidential briefing, to be read alongside our free frequently asked questions briefing has been produced solely for the benefit of passengers in this accident to provide clarity about what we know, further areas of investigation, and your legal rights.

If you would like further information or would like to discuss how we can help your family, please contact Sarah Stewart at **sstewart@stewartslaw.com** or Peter Neenan at **pneenan@stewartslaw.com**.

A. Investigations

According to ADS-B data sent directly from the aircraft, while the cabin crew were serving breakfast the flight encountered a rapid change in vertical rate, consistent with a sudden turbulence event causing it to rapidly ascend from 37,000 feet to 37,400 feet before dropping to 36,975 feet and then returning to its original altitude, all within 62 seconds. The effect of this caused seated passengers to feel pinned to their seats, and negative gravity forces that would have thrown unrestrained passengers and loose items against the ceiling of the cabin.

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CONFIDENTIAL PASSENGER BRIEFING



Singapore's Transport Safety Investigation Bureau (TSIB), a department within the Ministry of Transport of Singapore, has commenced an investigation into why this aircraft encountered such violent turbulence, with assistance from the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) as the accident involved an American-built aircraft. As part of that process, investigators will analyse data from the cockpit voice recorder and the flight data recorder.

B. What is turbulence?

Turbulence occurs in irregular, chaotic and unpredictable motions in airflow. Often encountered in storms when columns of air rise and fall (in downdrafts and updrafts), mountainous regions when the airflow over irregular terrain generates waves in the atmosphere, as well as weather fronts and strong air currents such as gulf streams. Turbulence can also occur in clear skies. Pilots are usually able to see patches of bad weather on their radars and take preparatory measures ahead of time. Turbulence presents a manageable challenge for pilots.

There were thunderstorms reported in and around the area at the time.

Turbulence related incidents are common, but flying into such severe turbulence is not. In addition to investigating the decisions in the immediate seconds and minutes prior to the entry into turbulence, the investigation will go back much further, considering all elements of planning that went into this flight. This will include weather warnings that were issued, how the airline responded to those warnings, the route selected, the altitude selected, and what other airlines planned and did.

How should pilots and crew respond to turbulence?

1. Decrease speed – this reduces the risk of structural damages to the airframe and lessens vibrations, making it easier for the flight crew to read flight instruments.

- 2. Seat belt signs pilots will notify the crew to switch on the signs to ensure all passengers and crew are immediately seated and to reduce the risk of injury.
- 3. Suspend cabin crew service it is not safe to serve hot meals or hot beverages during turbulence.
- 4. Inform Air Traffic Control to notify other aircraft to avoid the turbulent conditions, and request a climb, descent or divergence to avoid the turbulence.
- 5. Assess injuries and damage and consider a diversion if necessary.
- 6. Pilots and crew go through rigorous training on responding to turbulence and weather related events and should be well equipped to deal with the situation safely.

C. Potential claims

It is expected that the investigation will result in a clear reason as to why this flight was so badly and tragically affected.

Whilst it cannot be ruled out at this stage, it is not thought that flight control system problems were the likely cause.

There is a viable claim against Singapore Airlines under international conventions and greater detail on their liability is provided on our <u>SQ321 webpage</u>

Stewarts have successfully acted in claims against Singapore Airlines, and in cases involving turbulence and mid-air upsets resulting in serious life-changing injury, in particular spinal cord injury and brain injury. In addition to being the leading UK and EU claimaint aviation law firm, Stewarts has the leading catastrophic injury team in the UK. Over the last three years we have recovered in excess of £360 million in compensation for our clients who have spinal cord or brain injury.

"It is an incredibly warm and caring team". "They provided a personalised service that made me feel like an individual and not a billable item."

"Without doubt the leaders in this field".

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