

Beat: News

2 on missing Malaysia Airlines jet used stolen passports, raising questions

-, 09.03.2014, 02:34 Time

USPA News - Two of the passengers aboard a Malaysia Airlines jet that disappeared over the South China Sea on Saturday were traveling with European passports that were stolen in Thailand, officials said, raising questions about the cause of the presumed crash. Malaysia Airlines initially released a passenger list that included the names of Italian citizen Luigi Maraldi, 37, and Austrian citizen Christian Kozel, 30, but officials from both countries confirmed neither were not on the flight and had their passports stolen while in Thailand in recent years.

"Yes we can confirm [he was not on board]. [The] Austrian is safe, he was not on the plane. His passport was stolen in 2012 and reported to the authorities." Austrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Martin Weiss said. In Italy, foreign ministry spokesman Aldo Amati confirmed Maraldi was also not on the aircraft and that his passport was stolen "one year ago" in Thailand. The revelation raised questions about the possible cause of the aircraft's presumed crash and whether foul play may be involved. Malaysian authorities, responding to the reports, said they were unable to rule out terrorism or any other possible cause, while U.S. officials said establishing the real identities of those two passengers would be a top priority in the investigation. Just last month, the international police agency Interpol urged law enforcement agencies worldwide to take steps to prevent the use of stolen passports by terrorists and criminals. It said its Stolen and Lost Travel Documents (SLTD) database - which contains more than 40 million records from 167 countries - is only being used by "a handful" of countries. Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, a Boeing 777-200 aircraft, was carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew members when it disappeared over the South China Sea at around 2:40 a.m. local time on Saturday. The aircraft had departed Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at 12:41 a.m. and was scheduled to land in the Chinese capital of Beijing at around 6:30 a.m. As of Sunday morning, no wreckage had been found.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-1984/2-on-missing-malaysia-airlines-jet-used-stolen-passports-raising-questions.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619