

# Iran commander says requests to shut down country's airspace denied ahead of Ukraine plane crash

Updated January 12, 2020 10:55:07



**VIDEO:** A statement read on Iranian state TV said responsible parties would be held accountable for the crash. (ABC News)

An Iranian commander says repeated requests to close the country's airspace were denied before a civilian passenger plane was "unintentionally" shot down outside Tehran.

After initially denying responsibility, Iran has admitted to downing a Ukraine International Airlines Boeing 737-800 bound for Kiev amid US hostilities in the region on Wednesday, killing all 176 people on board.

General Amir Ali Hajizadeh, commander of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps airspace unit, said in a press conference his unit accepted "full responsibility" for the incident.

"We had requested several times that the country's airspace become clear of all flights," he said.

"Requests were made but due to some considerations it was not done and at the same time with the flights, the war situation continued to exist."

In an address broadcast by state TV, he said that when he learned about the downing of the plane: "I wished I was dead."



**RELATED STORY:** [Iran says it wants to analyse plane black box itself as Canada warns 'world is watching'](#)

**RELATED STORY:** [Iran admits to shooting down a Ukrainian plane. Here's what we know about the crash](#)

**RELATED STORY:** [This image could be evidence a missile brought down a Ukrainian airliner over Iran](#)

**MAP:** [Iran, Islamic Republic Of](#)

## Key points:

- Iranian authorities have said those responsible for the crash will be held accountable
- The Boeing 737 went down during take-off from Tehran just hours after Iran attacked US forces
- Officials say 82 Iranians, at least 57 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians died in the crash

## TOP STORIES

- [Climate policies will 'evolve' to beat emissions targets, PM says](#)
- [Key moments from Scott Morrison's bushfires interview with David Speers](#)
- ["I wished I was dead": Iranian airspace unit accepts 'full responsibility' for downed Ukrainian plane](#)
- ["I miss my people": Actor's dying wish to get home to NT](#)
- ["Much-loved" firefighter and father of two killed working on Victorian blaze](#)
- ["Killer" trees litter fire zones across Victoria. It's this crew's job to clear them away](#)
- [Queen summons Prince Harry for crisis meeting](#)
- [Do Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have their own wealth?](#)
- [Ford Mustang GT driven by Steve McQueen in Bullitt sells for \\$4.93 million](#)
- [Gold Coast police find cannabis garden in hidden room](#)
- [At least 11 dead as tornadoes, severe storms lash US](#)
- [No bail for alleged bushfire looters accused of double break-in as third person charged](#)
- [How ratepayers in one of the country's fastest growing cities 'lost \\$78 million'](#)
- [You've got to 'Get Schwifty' with our summer TV binge guide](#)
- **SPORT** [Bungee jumping came from Vanuatu — now Indigenous groups want to protect their customs](#)
- [Despite smog, food quality issues and the Great Firewall, many Australians chose to live in China. Here's why](#)
- [Jane Rimmer's teddy bear provides a rare glimpse into a life cut short 24 years ago](#)
- **SPORT** [US Open champ pulls out of Australian Open with knee injury](#)
- [It's cooler and calmer, so why can't we put these fires out?](#)
- **SPORT** [Australia falls short in ATP Cup semi-final against Spain](#)
- ["Everybody wanted to shock their parents": How 1960s youth fuelled the rise of op shops](#)
- [Lavender farmers want you to care for their crops as you pose for a pic](#)

Get the headlines to your mobile.  
NEWS on Messenger



CONNECT WITH ABC NEWS





PHOTO: All 176 passengers on board the Ukrainian plane died in the incident. (AP: Ebrahim Noroozi)

"We are sorry about this incident and we consider ourselves mournful just like families of these martyrs and sympathise with them," he said.

"It is as such that we have lost our own loved ones and we are regretful about it."

He said the airline's pilot and crew had done nothing wrong, and instead an Iranian officer made the "bad decision" to open fire on the plane after mistaking it for a cruise missile.

But General Hajizadeh blamed the US for the tragedy.

"After all, this is the price of mischiefs, turbulences and actions of America in the region," he said.

"That night ... the probability of fighter jets and cruise missiles entering the country was very high and [we] had prepared ourselves for an all-out conflict."

Iran's Supreme Leader has offered condolences and called for an investigation into the incident.

Iran's semi-official Fars news agency reported that Ayatollah Ali Khamenei — who until Saturday kept silent about the crash — had ordered top security officials to review the crash and announce the results.

"If some individuals, in any position, were aware of the issue but made statements contradicting the reality or hid the truth for any reason, they should be named and tried," said Fars, which is close to the Guard.

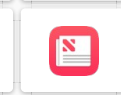
Others speculated that the security forces may have concealed information from civilian authorities.

"Concealing the truth from the administration is dreadful," Mohammad Fazeli, a sociology professor in Tehran, wrote on social media.

"If it had not been concealed, the head of civil aviation and the government spokesmen would not have persistently denied it."



PHOTO: The plane crashed on shortly after take-off from Tehran's main airport. (AP: Mohammad Nasiri)



### News Podcasts

Catch up with ABC News programs.



### GOT A NEWS TIP? >

If you have inside knowledge of a topic in the news, [contact the ABC](#).

### ABC BACKSTORY >

ABC teams share the story behind the story and insights into the making of digital, TV and radio content.

### EDITORIAL POLICIES >

Read about our editorial guiding principles and the standards ABC journalists and content makers follow.

[Learn more](#)



# 'Iran must take full responsibility'

Even as top Iranian officials and the military issued apologies, protests against authorities spread across Iran including in the capital Tehran, Shiraz, Esfahan, Hamedan and Orumiyeh.

Britain late on Saturday accused Iran of violating international law after its ambassador was arrested and briefly detained during the protests in Tehran.

Iranian media said ambassador Rob Macaire was arrested outside a university and detained for more than an hour before being released.

UK Foreign Secretary Dominic Raab said "the arrest of our ambassador in Tehran without grounds or explanation is a flagrant violation of international law".

Foreign governments have condemned Iran's actions in shooting down the plane, with Ukraine demanding compensation.

Canada, Ukraine and Britain, however, called Tehran's admission an important first step.

"I spoke with President [Hassan] Rouhani of Iran. I told him that Iran's admission that its own armed forces unintentionally shot down flight 752 is an important step towards providing answers for families, but I noted that many more steps must be taken," Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau told a media conference in Ottawa.

"What Iran has admitted to is very serious. Shooting down a civilian aircraft is horrific. Iran must take full responsibility.

"Canada will not rest until we get the accountability, justice, and closure that the families deserve."

Mr Trudeau said Mr Rouhani committed to collaborating with Canadian investigators, working to de-escalate tensions in the region and continuing a dialogue.

Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskiy has said the country expects a full investigation, a full admission of guilt and compensation.

"Iran has pleaded guilty to crashing the Ukrainian plane. But we insist on a full admission of guilt," Mr Zelenskiy said.

"We expect from Iran assurances of their readiness for a full and open investigation, bringing those responsible to justice, the return of the bodies of the dead, the payment of compensation, official apologies through diplomatic channels.

"Our profound regrets, apologies and condolences to our people, to the families of all victims, and to other affected nations."

President Rouhani tweeted the country "deeply regrets this disastrous mistake," promising that those behind the incident would be prosecuted.

## What we know about flight PS752



Iran's version of events did a complete 180 in the days after Ukraine International Airlines flight PS752 went down in Tehran. Here's what we actually know about the crash that killed 176 people.



**VIDEO:** Footage appears to show a mid-air explosion close to the flight's last transponder position. (ABC News)

## 'Human error' to blame

Earlier on Saturday (AEDT), Iranian Foreign Minister Javad Zarif tweeted that "human error" was to blame for the incident, after initially denying Iran brought down the aircraft in the tense aftermath of missile strikes on US targets in Iraq.

A statement read on state television said the airliner had flown close to a sensitive military site and parties responsible for shooting down the jet would be held accountable.

The statement said the plane was mistaken for a "hostile target" after it turned toward a "sensitive military centre" of the Revolutionary Guard.

The military was at its "highest level of readiness" it said, amid the heightened tensions with the US.

"In such a condition, because of human error and in a unintentional way, the flight was hit," the statement said.

It apologised for the disaster and said it would upgrade its systems to prevent such "mistakes" in the future.

The jetliner [went down on the outskirts of Tehran during take-off](#), just hours after [Iran launched a barrage of missiles at US forces](#).

Iran initially denied any wrongdoing but the US and Canada, citing intelligence, said [they believed Iran shot down the aircraft](#).

The plane, en route to the Ukrainian capital of Kiev, was carrying 167 passengers and nine crew members from several countries, including 82 Iranians, at least 57 Canadians and 11 Ukrainians, according to officials.

The Canadian Government earlier lowered the nation's death toll from 63.

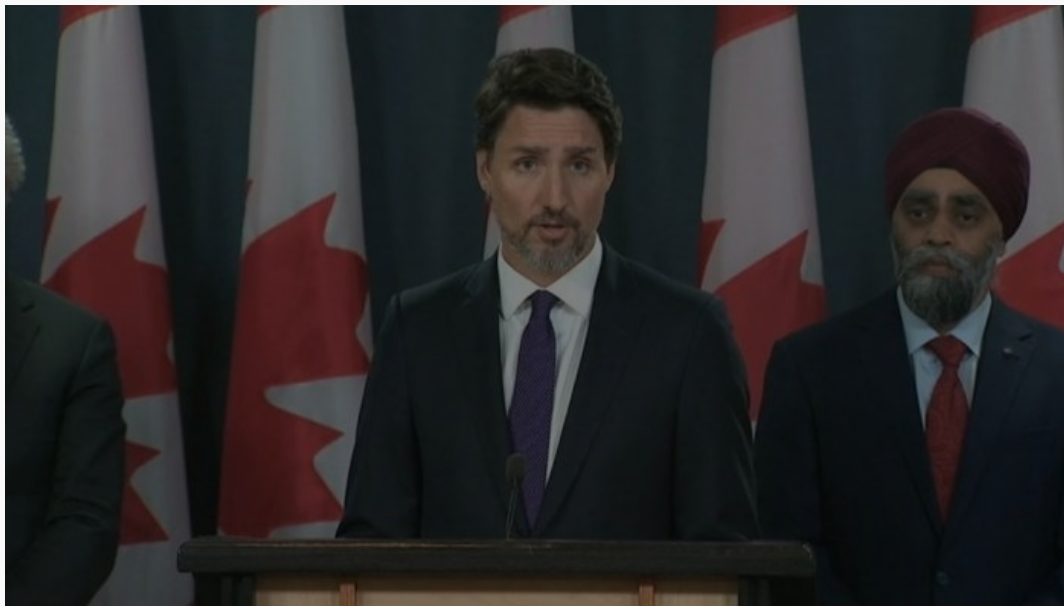
"This is the right step for the Iranian Government to admit responsibility, and it gives people a step toward closure with this admission," said Payman Parseyan, a prominent Iranian-Canadian in western Canada who lost a number of friends in the crash.

"I think the investigation would have disclosed it whether they admitted it or not. This will give them an opportunity to save face."



**PHOTO:** Memorials for those killed in the plane crash have been held across Canada.

(AP: Rob Gurdebek/The Canadian Press)



**VIDEO:** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said he wanted the crash "thoroughly investigated". (ABC News)

Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne offered her condolences to the victims and their families and said Iran's "acknowledgement and apology to all those affected was welcome".

Moving forward, she said it would be important that "a full and transparent investigation is undertaken, involving all nations who lost citizens in the tragedy".

"It is essential that all questions about how this tragedy happened are answered fully and that confidence is rebuilt in the safety of the international civilian air traffic network," she added.

Television reports on Friday indicated that debris had been cleared from the crash site, leaving the area to scavengers to pick over.

If the wreckage was indeed moved, some clues might have been lost unless the Iranians took careful steps to preserve evidence.

"Normally you would very carefully to map out a debris field," said Steve Wallace, former head of the accident-investigations office of the Federal Aviation Administration.

"If a missile struck the airplane, you would expect to find some pieces of it and residue of the explosive."

## AP/Reuters

**Topics:** [unrest-conflict-and-war](#), [government-and-politics](#), [disasters-and-accidents](#), [iran-islamic-republic-of](#), [ukraine](#), [iraq](#)

First posted January 11, 2020 15:01:01

## FEATURES



### Bushfire arson explainer

Australia's massive blazes have sparked big headlines about arsonists, but they're responsible for about 1 per cent of the total land burned in NSW — and it's a similar story in other states.



### As Australia burns, Scott Morrison rattles off an alibi

Bushfires are changing our lives and that means they are changing our political conversation. This is what we must start talking about.



### The 'sand mafia'

The global demand for sand it is fuelling a sinister black market organisation: the "sand mafia".



### Is the Royal family in dire trouble?

With the departure of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle come questions about the continued relevance of the monarchy to modern society.

## TOP STORIES

- [Climate policies will 'evolve' to beat emissions targets, PM says](#)
- [Key moments from Scott Morrison's bushfires interview with David Speers](#)
- ['I wished I was dead': Iranian airspace unit accepts 'full responsibility' for downed Ukrainian plane](#)
- ['I miss my people': Actor's dying wish to get home to NT](#)
- ['Much-loved' firefighter and father of two killed working on Victorian blaze](#)
- ['Killer' trees litter fire zones across Victoria. It's this crew's job to clear them away](#)
- [Queen summons Prince Harry for crisis meeting](#)
- [Do Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have their own wealth?](#)
- [Ford Mustang GT driven by Steve McQueen in Bullitt sells for \\$4.93 million](#)
- [Gold Coast police find cannabis garden in hidden room](#)

## JUST IN

- [Survivors create first mobile Stolen Generations education centre](#)
- [Legendary Iohario Diego the tortoise returning to Galapagos home where feats saved species](#)
- [Gold Coast police find cannabis garden in hidden room](#)
- [At least 11 dead as tornadoes, severe storms lash US](#)
- [Ford Mustang GT driven by Steve McQueen in Bullitt sells for \\$4.93 million](#)
- [Key moments from Scott Morrison's bushfires interview with David Speers](#)
- [No bail for alleged bushfire looters accused of double break-in as third person charged](#)
- [Queen summons Prince Harry for crisis meeting](#)
- [Australia falls short in ATP Cup semi-final against Spain](#)
- ['I miss my people': Actor's dying wish to get home to NT](#)

## MOST POPULAR

- ['I wished I was dead': Iranian airspace unit accepts 'full responsibility' for downed Ukrainian plane](#)
- [We crunched the numbers on bushfires and arson — the results might surprise you](#)
- [As Australia burns, Scott Morrison is rattling off an alibi](#)
- ['Much-loved' firefighter and father of two killed working on Victorian blaze](#)
- [Do Prince Harry and Meghan Markle have their own wealth?](#)
- [Australia fires photos show startling transformation before and after destruction](#)
- ['I miss my people': Actor's dying wish to get home to NT](#)
- [Buckingham Palace is in crisis mode — and its matriarch could be losing control](#)
- [You've got to 'Get Schwifty' with our summer TV binge guide](#)
- ['It's astonishing when you start looking into it': The rise of the sand mafia](#)

## ANALYSIS & OPINION

- [Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen is the woman China can't topple](#)
- [Millions of Americans wanted a self-help author to be President. That shouldn't come as a surprise](#)
- [As Australia burns, Scott Morrison is rattling off an alibi](#)
- [The wreckage of the MH17 disaster holds a message for Iran](#)
- [When Rafael Nadal won't set foot on the court, it's time to start asking serious questions](#)
- [Why Iran's role in the Ukrainian plane crash could be very bad news for Donald Trump](#)
- [Are we grooming kids for sporting greatness too early?](#)
- [The check-out policies of the Royal family are roughly the same ones as Hotel California](#)
- [Two lessons from the Iraq War point to the consequences of Trump's shock move](#)
- [Harry and Meghan's move pushes Royals into uncharted waters](#)

## SITE MAP

### Sections

[ABC News](#)  
[Just In](#)  
[World](#)  
[Business](#)  
[Health](#)  
[Entertainment](#)  
[Sport](#)  
[Analysis & Opinion](#)  
[Weather](#)  
[Topics](#)  
[Archive](#)  
[Corrections &](#)

### Local Weather

[Sydney Weather](#)  
[Melbourne Weather](#)  
[Adelaide Weather](#)  
[Brisbane Weather](#)  
[Perth Weather](#)  
[Hobart Weather](#)  
[Darwin Weather](#)  
[Canberra Weather](#)

### Local News

[Sydney News](#)  
[Melbourne News](#)  
[Adelaide News](#)  
[Brisbane News](#)  
[Perth News](#)  
[Hobart News](#)  
[Darwin News](#)  
[Canberra News](#)

### Media

[Video](#)  
[Audio](#)  
[Photos](#)

### Subscribe

[Podcasts](#)  
[Newsletters](#)

### Connect

[Contact Us](#)

