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Iran under growing pressure to hand over Ukraine jet black box

Canada, Ukraine, Britain and others ask for box to be sent to third country for examination in Munich

Іран під сильним тиском передає Україні чорний ящик

Канада та інші країни, громадяни яких загинули під час удару Ірану по українському цивільному літаку, посилили свої прохання до Ірану про передачу чорної скриньки третій стороні на експертизу. Після зустрічі на межі Мюнхенської конференції з питань безпеки міністр закордонних справ Канади Ф.Ф. Шампань заявив, що обладнання, необхідне для розшифровки коробки, перевезити до Тегерану неможливо. За його словами, саму чорну скриньку, власність авіакомпанії Ukraine Airlines, слід транспортувати до третьої країни - можливо, Франції - для експертизи аналізу її вмісту.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/16/iran-under-growing-pressure-to-hand-over-ukraine-jet-black-box>

Canada and other countries whose nationals were killed in the Iranian strike on a Ukrainian civilian jet leaving Tehran have stepped up their requests for Iran to hand over the black box to a third party for examination.

Iran's foreign minister, Mohammad Javad Zarif, has suggested specialist equipment should be sent to Tehran to help the Iranians decrypt the contents of the black box and has given a commitment the box will not be opened except in the presence of all interested parties. But with an impasse looming, western aviation experts have said it is not possible to send the cumbersome equipment to Tehran.

Victims of the crash on 8 January included 82 Iranians, 63 Canadians, 11 Ukrainians, 10 Swedes, four Afghans, three Germans and three Britons. Canada, Ukraine, Germany, Britain and Afghanistan have formed a group to pursue a thorough investigation of the incident.

Following a meeting on the margins of a Munich security conference, the Canadian foreign minister, François-Philippe Champagne, said: "On behalf of the grieving nations of this tragedy, we told minister Zarif in no certain terms that Iran must take steps toward resolving many outstanding questions of fact and of law."

Earlier he had met Zarif to discuss the issue of the black box and compensation for grieving families.

Zarif said: "We want more than anybody else to know what's in the black box, to know what actually happened."

Champagne said it was not possible for the equipment needed to decode the box to be transported to Tehran. He said the black box itself, the property of Ukraine Airlines, should be transported to a third country – probably France – for experts to analyse its contents.

Ukraine's foreign minister, Vadym Prystaiko, said the necessary equipment "is difficult to transport. We must approach a shared point when to do that. Because it is a sensitive matter we want to give Iranians certain time to understand how to ensure full transparency of this procedure."

A day earlier, on the sidelines of the conference, Canada's prime minister, Justin Trudeau, said he had impressed upon Zarif that a complete and independent investigation into the shooting down of the Ukrainian passenger plane was essential.

Trudeau said: "Iran does not have the level of technical expertise and mostly the equipment necessary to be able to analyse the damaged black boxes quickly. There is a beginning of a consensus

that ... [France] would be the right place to send those black boxes to get the proper information from them in a rapid way, and that is what we are encouraging the Iranian authorities to agree to.”

Iran does not dispute that it shot down the airliner, saying it mistook the plane for a potential incoming missile from US forces. The Revolutionary Guards were on high alert for American reprisals after Iran hit at a US-populated airbase in Iraq following the killing of the Iranian general Qassem Suleimani.

Speaking on the margins of the Munich conference, the EU foreign affairs chief, Josep Borrell, said Europe was not in a rush to pull out of the Iranian nuclear deal, and did not think a replacement could be readily negotiated, pointing out that the original deal took 12 years to negotiate. He said the deal’s preservation in part depended on Europe being able to develop a mechanism to reward Iran economically for abiding by its commitments in the deal.

Zarif has claimed Donald Trump was badly advised in being led to believe that the Iranian regime would fall before the US presidential elections in November.