

Wheelchair Passenger Suspected As Suicide Bomber In Somalia Plane Explosion

[the Wall Street Journal.](#)

“An individual got onto the plane in a wheelchair and is suspected of being the suicide bomber,” a Western diplomat briefed on the investigation told the New York-based newspaper Thursday.

The strength of the explosion ejected the alleged suicide bomber from the plane’s cabin and his body tumbled near the district of Bal’ad, about 20 miles from the capital, where it was recovered by authorities. The Djibouti-bound Airbus A321 was forced to make an emergency landing Tuesday, just minutes after jetting off from Aden Abulle International Airport in Mogadishu.

Hussien Mohamed, a freelance journalist in Mogadishu, spoke with eyewitnesses who watched in horror from the ground in Bal’ad as the incident unfolded in the sky above them. “First, they heard a heavy explosion before they saw a body fall from the plane,” Mohamed said in an interview Thursday.

Somali officials said the passenger who fell from the plane has been identified as Abdullahi Abdisalam Borleh, 55, from Somaliland. But they did not confirm if the man was the alleged suicide bomber. The crew and the 74 other passengers on board survived, though two people, Abdirashid Abdi Isamil and Ismail Ali Osoble, were wounded.

“Somalia’s Deputy Prime Minister Mohamed Omar Arte indicated that as soon as the investigation is concluded, he promised the government will step up airport security

against any potential threat," a spokesperson from Somalia's Office of the Prime Minister said in a statement Thursday.

Investigators suspect al-Shabab, a Somalia-based terrorist group, was behind the explosion, U.S. government sources told [Al-Shabab](#) launched its own insurgency on major Somali cities by 2009, controlling Mogadishu and southern Somalia until it was driven out by domestic and international forces around 2012. Many rural areas of