

Beat: Travel

UPDATE 1 -- Jumbo jet strikes building at Johannesburg airport, injuring 4

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USPA News - The wing of a British Airlines jetliner struck a building Sunday night while taxiing at the international airport in the South African city of Johannesburg, injuring four people inside the building, passengers and aviation officials said on Monday. The incident happened at about 10:40 p.m. local time on Sunday when British Airways flight 34 was about to take off from O. R. Tambo International Airport in Johannesburg on a nearly 11-hour-flight flight to London.

Footage from the scene showed the right wing of the Boeing 747 sliced itself through a portion of a brick building right next to the taxiway. "Just taxiing along and boom. ... Took about 20 meters (65.6 feet) off [the] top story [of the] building with [its] wing," passenger John Hart wrote on the social networking website Twitter. Both he and Harriet Tolputt, a spokeswoman for international aid agency Oxfam, posted photos of the incident. British Airways confirmed one of its jumbo jets was damaged while taxiing in Johannesburg and added that none of the 182 passengers and 17 crew members on board the aircraft were injured. "Customers were looked after by our staff and provided with hotel accommodation and we are arranging alternative flights for them," an airline spokeswoman said. Tolputt, however, criticized the evacuation procedure and told NBC News that passengers waited an hour for crews to put foam on a fuel leak, adding that some passengers were shaken and in tears. "Not impressed that first class passengers get off before premium economy during an emergency," she wrote on her Twitter account. South African Civil Aviation Authority (SACAA) spokeswoman Phindiwe Gwebu said four ground-handling employees who were inside the building suffered minor injuries from falling debris. "Fuel spillage was reported from the aircraft but this was contained by the airport fire services without further incidents," she said. According to a preliminary report, investigators were told that Flight 34 had received instructions from air traffic control to use taxiway B, but the aircraft failed to do so. "The crew continued onto taxiway M which is narrower, resulting in the aircraft impacting on an office building behind the SAA Technical hangers," Gwebu explained. Investigators from the SACAA arrived at the scene soon after the accident and witnessed the recovery of the aircraft on Monday morning, as well as the removal of the flight recorder. British Airways did not immediately provide more information about Sunday's incident, but the airline spokeswoman said it had launched a "full investigation" and the company will cooperate with the SACAA.

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