Beat: Technology

Severe turbulence injures 28 aboard Hong Kong-bound flight

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USPA News - More than two dozen people were injured Wednesday when severe turbulence hit a South African Airways (SAA) passenger plane while in Malaysian airspace en-route to Hong Kong, airline officials said. Two of those injured were in a critical condition.

The incident occurred on board SAA flight SA286 which took off from the South African city of Johannesburg on late Tuesday afternoon with 165 passengers on board for a flight to Hong Kong. It hit severe turbulence on Wednesday morning while crossing Malaysian airspace near the capital Kuala Lumpur, said SAA spokesman Tlali Tlali. "The crew of the flight immediately requested medical assistance for the passengers, which was arranged and ready on arrival of the aircraft in Hong Kong," Tlali said. The aircraft - an Airbus A343 - landed at Hong Kong`s Chek Lap Kok Airport at about 12:30 p.m. local time without further incident. The airline confirmed 25 passengers and three crew members were injured by the turbulence. "SAA requested medical and trauma assistance which are now attending to the passengers and crew," Tlali said. Emergency services in Hong Kong said the victims were taken to three hospitals, where two of those injured were in a critical condition. Turbulence is caused by irregular motion of air and brings about rapid bumps or jolts to an aircraft, which can cause an aircraft to momentarily lose control in severe cases. Turbulence may occur in the vicinity of thunderstorms where strong upward and downward motions of air can occur, but turbulence can also happen in clear air regions where air masses with different speeds, directions or temperatures meet. Aviation experts have urged passengers to keep their seatbelt on throughout the flight, even though it is not mandatory, as most of those who get injured by severe turbulence were not using their seatbelt. In August 2013, a total of 26 passengers and cabin attendants were injured and transported to local hospitals after two passenger planes experienced severe turbulence as they prepared to land at Hong Kong`s Chek Lap Kok Airport. It happened as the region was experiencing unsettling weather due to Tropical Storm Kong-rey.

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