

# Fireball strikes Soviet airliner

SCOTSMAN

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MOSCOW, Friday. — Tass news agency today reported an incident in which a ball of lightning passed through the passenger lounge of a Soviet airliner and "flew above the heads of the stunned passengers." No-one was injured, but equipment aboard the plane was damaged.

The brief account did not say when the incident occurred, but a spokesman for the news agency said it had been early this week.

Tass said that soon after

taking off in good weather from Sochi, on the Black Sea, the crew had seen thunderclouds about 64 miles from their flight path.

"Suddenly, at the height of 1,200 yards a fireball about four inches in diameter appeared on the fuselage in front of the crew's cockpit. It disappeared with a deafening noise but re-emerged several seconds later in the passengers' lounge, after piercing in an uncanny way through the airtight metal wall," Tass said.

"The fireball slowly flew about the heads of the stunned passengers. In the tail section of the airliner it divided into two glowing crescents which then joined together again and left the plane almost noiselessly."

The plane immediately returned to Sochi, where mechanics discovered two holes, one in the fuselage and another in the tail section, through which the lightning had entered and left the plane. — AP.

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