BIRMINGHAM-BOUND MONARCH HOLIDAY FLIGHT INTERCEPTED BY FIGHTER JET

News / Airlines

Passengers have told of their panic after a Monarch Airlines holiday flight travelling from Madeira, Portugal, to Birmingham was intercepted by a French fighter jet.

The fighter jet flew so close to the plane, passengers said they could see the pilot in the other cockpit.

The Monarch flight ZB983 reportedly lost communications over French airspace, and the jet was sent to intercept the flight as standard procedure.

Grandmother Caroline Regan, from Birmingham, who was on board with her husband Tony, said passengers were offered no explanation about why the jet was so close to their plane, and said it was "very unusual".

Speaking to the Birmingham Mail, she said: "It was right by our window.

"It was so close you could see the pilot.

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"It seemed to follow us and there was a small amount of panic - everyone on our plane stood up to have a look."

"Some people were anxious."A Monarch spokesman said the aircraft, thought to have been a Rafale jet from the French military, was sent as standard procedure.

According to the Daily Mail and ITV News, an airline spokesman said: "Monarch Airlines can confirm that Flight ZB983 from Funchal to Birmingham on October 12 was out of communication for a very short time while in French airspace."

"As is standard procedure when any loss of contact occurs, military aircraft were launched to intercept the aircraft."

"Communication with air traffic control had been re-established by the time the intercept occurred. The flight continued as planned with the aircraft landing as scheduled."

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