

## In wake of crash, Egypt opens tombs to spur tourist interest (Update)

November 5 2015, by Brian Rohan

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A visitor looks at colored carvings on a wall at the Horemheb tomb, the last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of Egypt, in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, Egypt, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. Egypt has opened three tombs in the ancient city of Luxor to the public, hoping to spur tourism interest despite the shadow of last weekend's airline crash in the Sinai Peninsula. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Egypt opened three tombs in the ancient city of Luxor to the public for the first time on Thursday, hoping to spur interest in tourism despite the

shadow of last weekend's airline crash in the Sinai Peninsula.

"It is very sad what happened, but we have to wait for the result of the investigation," Antiquities Minister Mamdouh Eldamaty said, before descending into one of the newly opened tombs. "It was not a terror act, it was an accident."

The most significant tomb opened Thursday was that of Huy, Viceroy of Kush under the famed King Tutankhamun. Inside the tomb, wall paintings depict a great festival with southerners from Nubia paying tribute, confirming Egypt's domination.

"The tomb also shows Huy receiving the seal of his office, and other unparalleled details regarding the administration of Egypt's most important foreign holdings," said John Darnell of Yale University. "In many ways the tomb of Huy gives us one of the most detailed and colorful glimpses into the interactions of Egyptians and Nubians during the high noon of imperial Egypt."

Eldamaty said the newly opened tombs, in the Qurnat Marey area of Luxor, are among the most important ones made for nobles of the New Kingdom period, which ended over 3,000 years ago. The opening, planned before the airline disaster, is part of government plans to highlight new archaeological sites to encourage tourism.

Most of the tombs in Luxor are secured against unauthorized entry, but the ministry keeps several open at any given time, rotating access regularly to give them a rest from humidity and visitors.



An Egyptian guard of honor wears Pharaonic clothes as he welcomes visitors at Hatshepsut Temple on the west bank of the Nile River at Luxor, Egypt, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2015 marking the city's national day, which coincides with the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

The two other tombs opened Thursday are known as Tomb TT 277 of Amunemnet, a priest in the funerary temple of Amenhotep III, and Tomb TT 278 of Amunemhab, who was the keeper of the cattle belonging to the temple of the god Amun Re.

The cause of Saturday's crash of a Metrojet flight packed with Russian vacationers returning home from the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh is under investigation, but the Islamic State extremist group has claimed responsibility and British Prime Minister David Cameron said it was "more likely than not" that a bomb brought down the flight. All 224 on

board were killed.

Cameron has grounded all British flights to and from Sinai, stranding thousands of tourists, citing "intelligence and information." Germany's Lufthansa Group said later Thursday it was also suspending all flights to and from Sharm el-Sheikh.



Members of Cairo Opera Ballet dance in front of the Hatshepsut Temple on the west bank of the Nile River at Luxor, Egypt, Wednesday, Nov. 4, 2015 marking the city's national day, which coincides with the discovery of Tutankhamun's tomb in 1922. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

Officials from Russia and Egypt are dismissing the bomb theory as premature speculation. Many Egyptians in tourism-dependent areas are repeating the line with a sometimes desperate hopefulness.

Tourism, a key foreign currency earner for Egypt's economy, is making a gradual recovery after years of political upheaval, but the future would be grim if it's proven that an Islamic State bomb indeed brought down the Russian passenger plane. The army is already fighting in a northern corner of Sinai Islamic militants who in recent months claimed allegiance to the Islamic State group, but such a revelation would undermine its claims that it has the insurgency under control and that Egypt is safe for tourists.



A woman holds a portrait of Nina Lushchenko, one of the victims of a plane crash, during her funeral at a cemetery in the village of Sitnya, 80 km (about 50 miles) of Veliky Novgorod, Russia, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. The first victim of Saturday's plane crash in Egypt was laid to rest on Thursday following a funeral service in a medieval church in the north Russian city of Veliky Novgorod. Russia's Airbus 321-200 broke up over the Sinai Peninsula en route from the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg, killing all 224 on board. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)



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Pavel, the nephew of one of the plane crash victims Nina Lushchenko, left, reacts at her grave side with her daughter Veronika, right, and granddaughter, during her funeral at a cemetery in the village of Sitnya, 80 km (about 50 miles) of Veliky Novgorod, Russia, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. The first victim of Saturday's plane crash in Egypt was laid to rest on Thursday following a funeral service in a medieval church in the north Russian city of Veliky Novgorod. Russia's Airbus 321-200 broke up over the Sinai Peninsula en route from the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg, killing all 224 on board. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)



A photographer takes a photo of carvings on a wall at the Horemheb tomb, the last pharaoh of the 18th Dynasty of Egypt, in the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, Egypt, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. Egypt has opened three tombs in the ancient city of Luxor to the public, hoping to spur tourism interest despite the shadow of last weekend's airline crash in the Sinai Peninsula. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)





An Egyptian woman peers out of her roof to watch the opening of tombs at Qurnat Marey area of Luxor, Egypt, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. Egypt has opened three tombs in the ancient city of Luxor to the public, hoping to spur tourism interest despite the shadow of last weekend's airline crash in the Sinai Peninsula. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)



Nina Lushchenko's nephew Pavel reacts by her coffin, during her funeral at a cemetery in the village of Sitnya, 80 km (about 50 miles) of Veliky Novgorod, Russia, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. The first victim of Saturday's plane crash in Egypt was laid to rest on Thursday following a funeral service in a medieval church in the north Russian city of Veliky Novgorod. Russia's Airbus 321-200 broke up over the Sinai Peninsula en route from the resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh to St. Petersburg, killing all 224 on board. (AP Photo/Dmitry Lovetsky)



Britain's Prime Minister David Cameron, left, greets Egyptian president Abdel Fatah el-Sisi at 10 Downing Street in London ahead of their meeting Thursday Nov. 5, 2015. British Prime Minister David Cameron declared Thursday it was "more likely than not" that a bomb brought down a Metrojet flight packed with Russian vacationers—a scenario that officials from Russia and Egypt tried to dismiss as premature speculation. Cameron said he had grounded all flights to and from Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, stranding thousands of British tourists at the Red Sea resort of Sharm el-Sheikh, because of "intelligence and information" indicating that a bomb was the likely culprit in the crash Saturday that killed 224 people. (Stefan Rousseau/PA via AP) UNITED KINGDOM OUT



One of Egypt's famed King Tutankhamun's golden sarcophagus is displayed at his tomb in a glass case at the Valley of the Kings in Luxor, Egypt, Thursday, Nov. 5, 2015. (AP Photo/Amr Nabil)

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