

# Flight 9525 Crash: What's Religion Got To Do with It? German Co-Pilot as Terrorist

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Region: [Europe](#)

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[Once it became clear that Andreas Lubitz, 28,](#) deliberately crashed Germanwings Flight 9525, a reporter immediately asked “what was his religion?” (Parent company Lufthansa said they didn’t know). Authorities said there was no evidence it was “terrorism.”

Lubitz is from Rhineland-Palatinate, known for its wine-growing and pharmaceuticals. It is roughly 2/5s Roman Catholic and a third Lutheran. A fourth of its people don’t really care about religion one way or another.

Why in the world would his religion be relevant? If he did crash the plane on purpose then presumably he was depressed and wanted not only to commit suicide but also to be a mass murderer. You could understand how a depressed person with low self-esteem might think it ego-boosting to determine the fate of so many others.

It isn’t political terrorism, likely, but certainly it was a terroristic act of killing.

But we know why they asked. It was out of bigotry against Muslims, probing whether another one had gone postal. The subtext is that white Christians don’t go off the deep end, even though obviously they do, in large numbers. It isn’t a logical question about Andreas Lubitz from Rhineland-Palatinate. Zeynep Tufekci tweeted,

Maybe I need to add some more principles to my [Top Ten differences between White Terrorists and Others](#), like “terrorism is only ruled out when the whiteness of the perp can be firmly established.”

**Juan Cole** teaches Middle Eastern and South Asian history at the University of Michigan. His new book, [The New Arabs: How the Millennial Generation Is Changing the Middle East](#) (Simon and Schuster), will officially be published July 1st. He is also the author of [Engaging the Muslim World](#) and [Napoleon’s Egypt: Invading the Middle East](#) (both Palgrave Macmillan). He has appeared widely on television, radio and on op-ed pages as a commentator on Middle East affairs, and has a regular column at Salon.com. He has written, edited, or translated 14 books and has authored 60 journal articles. His weblog on the contemporary Middle East is [Informed Comment](#).

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