

Signal failure indicates 'rapid' Air France catastrophe: official

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No signal has been heard from distress beacons on a missing Air France plane, indicating it suffered a "very rapid" catastrophe, a top French space agency official told AFP on Monday.

"No signal from any of the three beacons on board the Air France A330 was picked up by satellites," said Philippe Hazane, deputy director of the National Centre for Space Studies (CNES), a French government agency for space policy.

"If no signal has been registered that indicates that they were destroyed before they could emit one and therefore that the catastrophe was very rapid."

Distress beacons are fixed to all passenger planes and emit an automatic signal when the plane is in distress, taking a dangerous route or suffering a crash. Signals cannot be picked if the beacons are underwater, Hazane said.

The CNES is based in Toulouse and would have been alerted immediately in case of a signal picked up by one of five satellites orbiting the Earth. The technology can find the precise location of a [plane](#) emitting a distress signal.

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