

Search area shifts slightly for crashed AirAsia plane

January 6 2015, by Tatan Syuflana



A crew member of Indonesian Navy ship KRI Bung Tomo holds a piece of the window panel of AirAsia Flight 8501 recovered in search operations for the ill-fated jetliner, during a press conference at the Navy's Eastern Fleet Naval Base in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. The Singapore-bound plane crashed into the Java Sea 42 minutes after taking off on Dec. 28. (AP Photo/Trisnadi)

The search operation for AirAsia Flight 8501 will spread slightly eastward on Tuesday as the weather and currents drag wreckage in that

direction, the head of Indonesia's rescue agency said.

Bad weather has made it difficult to locate parts of the plane and recover the 125 bodies that are still missing, said National Search and Rescue Agency's director of operation Suryadi B. Supriyadi.

There were 162 passengers and crew on the Airbus 320 when it crashed Dec. 28. So far, 37 bodies have been recovered.

"Time is of the essence ... but it seems like it is hard to beat the weather," Supriyadi said, adding that divers trying to reach the wreckage Monday were forced to return to their ships by strong current as rough seas continued to impede dive and search teams.

The debris found so far indicates the body of the plane broke into parts, he said.

On Monday, Indonesia's transportation ministry announced harsh measures against everyone who allowed AirAsia Flight 8501 to take off without proper permits—including the suspension of the airport's operator and officials in the control tower.

Routing permits for all airlines flying in the country will be examined to see if they violate the rules, said Djoko Murjatmodjo, acting director general of air transportation.

"Who knows if other airlines are also doing the same thing," he said.



Members of the National Search And Rescue Agency and Indonesian soldier carry a coffin of a victim who was aboard the AirAsia Flight 8501 at the airport in Pangkalan Bun, Monday, Jan. 5 2015. Highlighting the depth of Indonesia's air safety problems, the transportation ministry announced harsh measures Monday against everyone who allowed AirAsia Flight 8501 to take off without proper permits—including the suspension of the airport's operator and officials in the control tower. The crackdown comes as searchers continue to fight bad weather while combing the Java Sea for bodies and wreckage of the Airbus A320 that crashed Dec. 28. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

The plane was traveling between Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, and Singapore on a Sunday. Officials have since said its permit for the popular route was only for Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, and that AirAsia quietly switched three of those days. Officials in Singapore, however, have said the plane was authorized to fly on Sundays from its end.

Applications for specific routes take into account issues including air

traffic rights and airport takeoff and landing slots.

While the airline is being investigated, Indonesia has banned all AirAsia flights between Surabaya and Singapore.

AirAsia Indonesia President Director Sunu Widyatmoko said by text Monday that the airline will cooperate with the government during the evaluation, but would not comment on the permit allegations until the process is complete.

Violations of the regulations would boost legal arguments for passengers' family members seeking compensation, said Alvin Lie, a former lawmaker and aviation analyst. But he added AirAsia would not be the only one to blame.

"The Surabaya-Singapore flights have been operating since October ... and the government didn't know," he said. "Where was the government's supervision?"

Murjatmodjo said individuals who allowed to plane to fly without permits would be suspended while the investigation is pending.



Commander of Indonesian Navy ship KRI Bung Tomo Col. Yayan Sofyan holds a piece of the airplane part from AirAsia Flight 8501 recovered in search operations for the ill-fated jetliner, during a press conference at the Navy's Eastern Fleet Naval Base in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. The Singapore-bound plane crashed into the sea 42 minutes after taking off on Dec. 28. (AP Photo/Trisnadi)

The ministry issued a directive Dec. 31 ordering all airlines to provide pilots with up-to-date weather reports before they take off, he said. Currently, it's up to the captain and co-pilot to research and evaluate flying conditions before departing. In other countries, carriers' flight operations departments perform that task for them.

After Indonesia deregulated its aviation industry in the 1990s, dozens of airlines emerged making air travel affordable for the first time for many in the world's fourth most populous nation. But accidents in recent years

have raised questions about the safety of Indonesia's booming airline sector, with experts saying poor maintenance, rule-bending, and a shortage of trained professionals are to blame.

AirAsia, which began operations in 2001 and quickly became one of the region's leaders in low-cost [air travel](#), has not experienced any other crashes and is widely considered a benchmark for safety and professionalism.



Members of a navigation ship KN Jadayat prepare to use beacon buoy to start the search operations of the wreckage of AirAsia Flight QZ 8501 at Kumai Port in Pangkalan Bun, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. Highlighting the depth of Indonesia's air safety problems, the transportation ministry announced harsh measures Monday against everyone who allowed AirAsia Flight 8501 to take off without proper permits—including the suspension of the airport's operator and officials in the control tower. The crackdown comes as searchers continue to fight bad weather while combing the Java Sea for bodies and wreckage of the Airbus A320 that crashed Dec. 28. (AP Photo/Achmad Ibrahim)

It is not known what caused Flight 8501 to crash into the Java Sea 42 minutes into what was supposed to be a two-hour flight, though Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency says [bad weather](#) appears to have been a factor. Just before losing contact, the pilot told [air traffic control](#) that he was approaching threatening clouds, but was denied permission to climb to a higher altitude because of heavy [air traffic](#). No distress signal was issued.

Sonar has identified five large objects that are believed to be chunks of the fuselage on the ocean floor, but strong currents, silt and mud have kept divers from seeing or reaching the objects.

No signals have been heard from the cockpit voice and flight data recorders, or black boxes. Poor weather has prevented ships from dragging ping locators.



A relative of a victim of AirAsia Flight 8501 cries as she waits for the handover of the body to the family at a police hospital in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Monday, Jan. 5, 2015. The Singapore-bound plane crashed into the sea 42 minutes after taking off on Dec. 28. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

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