

Divers resume search for victims and fuselage of AirAsia jet

January 5 2015, by Eileen Ng



Members of Mawar Sharon church attend a prayer service for the relatives of lost loved ones aboard the AirAsia Flight 8501, in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia Sunday, Jan. 4, 2015. About 40 members of the church were aboard the plane which crashed into the Java Sea a week ago. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

The weather improved Monday and divers will attempt again to locate large objects on the ocean floor believed to be the fuselage of the AirAsia flight that crashed more than one week ago, killing all 162 on

board.

At least five ships with equipment that can detect the plane's [black boxes](#) have been deployed to the area where the suspected plane parts were spotted, said Suryadi B. Supriyadi, Indonesia's National Search and Rescue director of operations.

"If it cannot be done by divers, we will use sophisticated equipment with capabilities of tracking underwater objects and then will lift them up," Supriyadi said.

Five large objects—the biggest measuring 18 meters (59 feet) long and 5.4 meters (18 feet) wide and believed to be the fuselage—have been detected, and Supriyadi repeated that officials expect that many passengers and crew will be found trapped inside.

"But today's searching mission is still, once again, depend on the weather," he said.

Divers tried to reach the site on Sunday, but rolling seas stirred up silt and mud, leaving them with zero visibility.

Also Sunday, emotionally exhausted family members sang and cried at a tiny chapel in Surabaya, the city where Flight 8501 departed from Dec. 28. The Rev. Philip Mantofa, who heads the congregation at Mawar Sharon Church—where more than a quarter of the victims were members—urged those gathered to find comfort in their faith.

"If God has called your child, allow me to say this: Your child is not to be pitied," Mantofa said, locking eyes with a grieving father seated in the front row. "Your child is already in God's arms. One day, your family will be reunited in heaven."



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It is not known what caused the Singapore-bound plane to crash into the Java Sea 42 minutes after taking off on what was supposed to be a two-hour flight. 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.

Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, has been gripped by grief as bodies, one by one, continue arriving in simple, numbered coffins after being painstakingly pulled from the water. Four more bodies were brought to shore on Sunday, raising the total to 34.

The crash of Flight 8501 has triggered an intensive international search-and-recovery operation involving 20 planes and helicopters along with 27 ships from Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Singapore and the United States. All have been desperately searching for the all-important black boxes, pieces of the Airbus A320 and corpses.

The investigation got a boost over the weekend when sonar equipment identified five large objects on the seabed in the search area, but no images have been captured confirming they are part of the aircraft. Suspected plane parts also were seen scattered on beaches during an aerial survey.



CORRECTS SECOND SENTENCE -
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While it remains unclear what caused the [plane crash](#), bad weather appears to have been a factor, according to a report by Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency.

Indonesian authorities have also announced the grounding of AirAsia flights from Surabaya to Singapore, with the Transport Ministry saying the airline did not have a permit to fly on Sundays. However, Singapore's Civil Aviation Authority said that from its end, the airline had been approved to fly the route daily.



Relatives of Juanita Limantara, one of the victims of AirAsia Flight 8501 crash,

weep during the handover of her body to the family at a police hospital in Surabaya, East Java, Indonesia, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2015. Divers were grappling with light rain and rolling waves Sunday as they tried to reach what is believed to be the fuselage of AirAsia Flight 8501, thick sediment on the sea floor leaving them with zero visibility. (AP Photo/Firdia Lisnawati)

AirAsia, which began operations in 2001 and quickly became one of the region's most popular low-cost carriers, said it was reviewing the suspension. The crash was the airline's first.

While Indonesia is predominantly Muslim, many of the plane's passengers were Christians of Chinese descent. The Rev. Mantofa's congregation was hit particularly hard, with 45 of the crash victims—from 13 families—belonging to his large Pentecostal church.



Crew members of Indonesian Air Force NAS 332 Super Puma helicopter look out of the windows during a search operation for the victims of AirAsia Flight 8501 over the Java Sea, Indonesia, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2015. Divers were grappling with light rain and rolling waves Sunday as they tried to reach what is believed to be the fuselage of the crashed plane, thick sediment on the sea floor leaving them with zero visibility. (AP Photo/Adi Weda, Pool)



Crew members of Indonesian Air Force NAS 332 Super Puma helicopter look out of the windows during a search operation for the victims of AirAsia Flight 8501 over the Java Sea, Indonesia, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2015. Divers were grappling with light rain and rolling waves Sunday as they tried to reach what is believed to be the fuselage of the crashed plane, thick sediment on the sea floor leaving them with zero visibility. (AP Photo/Adi Weda, Pool)



Crew members of Indonesian Air Force's Super Puma helicopter prepare for a search operation for the victims and the wreckage of AirAsia Flight 8501 at Pangkalan Bun Airport, Indonesia, Sunday, Jan. 4, 2015. Divers were grappling with light rain and rolling waves Sunday as they tried to reach what is believed to be the fuselage of the crashed plane, thick sediment on the sea floor leaving them with zero visibility. (AP Photo/Tatan Syuflana)

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