

Debunking QZ8501 crash theories

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QZ8501 An article published in the Australian news portal News.com.au today debunked several of the theories by citing explanations from aviation industry experts, as reported by various media organisations.

Sea Landing

Theory: The pilot made an emergency water landing but the plane succumbed to high seas.

International consultancy Ailevon Pacific Aviation Consulting, Oliver Lamb said that landing on water is difficult and rare. He added that it is only possible with the right conditions, which include calm seas, which was not the case in the QZ8501 crash.

“In order to successfully land on water, you need to have very calm seas, a very skilled pilot and you need to be in an area where all the technical conditions and atmospheric are easily managed. Otherwise, it’s like hitting concrete,” Lamb told News Corp Australia.

Plane ‘broke up’ upon impact with water

Theory: Fully-clothed bodies found suggest the plane ‘broke up’ upon impact with water after suffering ‘aerodynamic stall’.

The plane did not stall but would probably have been hit by severe turbulence causing it to glide, spin out of control and maybe enter the water upside down, said former British Airways pilot Stephen Buzdygan to The Telegraph.

“I would suggest that there was some sort of upset to the aircraft - severe downdrafts or clear air turbulence. They have had some sort of upset and not been able to control it.

“If it is upside down in shallow water, that would suggest the aircraft became disoriented,” he said.

QZ8501 flew through ‘thunderstorm factory’

Theory: The crash area that the plane flew through is avoided by most pilots because of violent weather patterns earning it the name ‘thunderstorm factory’. Someone might have plotted the aircraft’s course wrongly to fly through the area.

Lamb said that aircrafts are built to fly through thunderstorms and do it on a daily basis all over the world unless QZ8501 was flying through “a freak thunderstorm with forces that are very rare”.

Plane was flying at extremely high altitude

Theory: Reports have surfaced that the AirAsia flight was flying at high altitudes, from 6,000 to 9,000 feet per minute.

Lamb said the aircraft would not have had enough power to climb to that altitudes and the data obtained on that is 'strange'.

"I just don't think the aircraft would have anywhere near that kind of power at that point.

"To get an aircraft off the ground and climb in the sky, it takes a lot of power, and as you go further up, and the atmosphere is thinner, it takes even greater amounts of power at high altitudes to go even higher," he added.

Catastrophic metal fatigue

Theory: Pressurisation and depressurisation cycle during take-offs and landings caused the plane metal to stress and break, causing it to crash.

Lamb said metal fatigue used to be a problem of the past and has been rectified by manufacturers now to withstand the metal stressing in aircraft plus QZ8501 was fairly new.

"Metal fatigue used to be an issue in the 70s, but airlines and manufacturers have been aware of this for a very long time, and have adjusted the maintenance regimes and the way aircrafts are built to resist this.

"This aircraft was also very young in aviation terms – only about seven years," he told News Corp Australia.

Mid-air stall

Theory: Technical malfunction caused the pilot to accidentally stall the plane mid-air.

Lamb said that scenario might have only happened if the plane was travelling very slowly. Also, the AirAsia flight was flying at a high enough altitude for the pilot to recover, if it stalled.

"A mid-air stall is when a plane is travelling too slowly in the air for it to remain upright.

"Pilots are well-trained at the event of a stall, and the AirAsia pilot was travelling at a high enough altitude to be able to recover if there was a stall," he was quoted saying.

Mid-air bomb explosion

Theory: The plane might have been carrying a bomb which exploded mid-air, causing damage to critical parts of the aircraft.

If the bomb was an act of terrorism, no one has either owned up or taken responsibility, International Aviation Security Management Association Asia Pacific vice-president Desmond Ross told the ABC.

“What is confusing is that, if it was an act of terrorism ... there have been no claims of responsibility.

“And there’s not much value in blowing up an aircraft if you don’t tell the world why you have done it and who you are,” he said.

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