

Indonesia to call off search for AirAsia crash victims

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By Reuters

QZ8501 Indonesia will on Sunday end a search for the bodies of 56 people missing from an AirAsia jet that crashed in the Java Sea in December, a national rescue agency official said.

AirAsia flight QZ8501 lost contact with air traffic control during bad weather less than halfway into a two-hour flight from Surabaya in Indonesia to Singapore on Dec 28. All 162 people on board the Airbus A320 were killed.

“Some of our ships and personnel have been pulled back already and some remain on standby, but officially the operation will be finished on Sunday,” Yusuf Latif, a spokesperson for the search and rescue agency, told Reuters.

The flight data and cockpit voice recorders - known as ‘black boxes’ - were recovered two weeks after the crash. Large pieces of the fuselage were also found on the sea floor.

A multi-national rescue effort, led by the Indonesian military and often hampered by bad weather and strong currents, recovered 106 bodies, with 56 unaccounted for.

Few details of the analysis of the flight recorders have been made public.

The National Transportation Safety Committee has revealed that the French first officer was at the controls of the jet just before the accident.

Sources told Reuters the captain of was out of his seat conducting an unusual procedure when his co-pilot apparently lost control, but Indonesian authorities said there was no evidence of that.

The AirAsia crash was the latest in a string of accidents to hit Indonesia’s aviation industry, which is among the fastest-growing in the region, and has stepped up pressure on the government and airlines to improve safety.

The final result of the investigation is due in about six months, an investigator said.

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