

Updates on the Accident Investigation for the Air France Flight 447 Crash near Brazil

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As the investigation into the crash enters its third week, ships, planes, and submarines continue to search the Atlantic Ocean for wreckage, for the bodies of the victims, and especially the black boxes.

Since the June 1st crash of an Air France A330 in the Atlantic Ocean near Brazil, Ships, planes, and submarines from Brazil, France, the US, and other countries have searched for clues to the crash in a large area of the Atlantic ocean between Brazil and Africa. So far, a wide variety of wreckage, and the remains of about 50 of the 228 occupants, have been recovered. Yet to be recovered are the aircraft's black boxes, the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder, that may hold the keys to understanding why the aircraft crashed.

Air France flight 447 was a scheduled international flight from Rio de Janeiro to Paris, and crashed in the Atlantic Ocean in an area roughly 600 miles, or 960 kilometers, off the northeast coast of Brazil. Several areas of suspected aircraft debris were also found near the estimated position of its last radio communication. All 216 passengers and 12 crew members, representing 32 nationalities, are missing and presumed dead.

There were no distress calls or other unusual communications from the flight crew. However, 24 automatically generated maintenance messages were transmitted from the plane shortly before the crash. According to Air France officials, these messages indicated that there were several problems with the aircraft, including some unspecified problems with the electrical system and cabin pressurization system.

The current weather conditions in the areas around the debris fields, and the depth of the ocean in those areas, will complicate the recovery of the black boxes or of any debris from the ocean floor. The Brazilian navy estimates the ocean in the vicinity of the suspected area of the crash is between 2,000 and 3,000 meters deep. The French government has sent a ship carrying submersibles that can operate to a depth of six kilometers or about 20,000 feet.

This is the first time that passengers have been killed in an A330 since this model entered airline service in 1993. This is the eighth time since 1970 that passengers have died while traveling on an Air France aircraft. The previous fatal event was the July 2000 crash of a Concorde near Paris.

The investigation is headed by the French Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyses (BEA), the equivalent of the NTSB in the US or the AAIB in the UK, and the BEA will be assisted by several other nations, including Brazil and the US. For updates on this investigation, including the search for the black boxes, and for the latest news from AirSafe.com, visit brazil.airsafe.org.

AirSafe.com provides the public with factual and timely information on airline safety and security events, as well as information about fear of flying, baggage rules, filing airline complaints, and other airline issues that concern the flying public.

AirSafe.com Foundation
24 Roy St., #302
Seattle, WA 98109
206-300-8727
tcurtis @ airsafe.com

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