

12 Bodies Found as Search Teams Reach Crash Site

May 11, 2012



Mount Salak, where the crash occurred. The red line shows the presumed flightpath of the plane, while the green line shows the route rescuers are taking to reach the crash site.

Search teams found at least 12 bodies Friday on the steep slope of an Indonesian volcano where a Sukhoi Superjet crashed while demonstrating the plane for potential buyers from airlines, an Indonesian official said.

All 45 aboard the plane that crashed Wednesday are feared dead.

"Today, we have discovered 12 victims, all dead," Rear Marshal Daryatmo, head of the national search and rescue agency, told reporters Friday.

The search team used ropes to climb up to the wreckage through jungle on the nearly vertical slopes of Mount Salak, search and rescue agency spokesman Gagah Prakoso said by telephone.

Thick fog and the jagged mountain's slopes are still keeping helicopters from landing, so the bodies remain at the crash site, Daryatmo said. He added that the soldiers, police and

volunteers on the rescue team were cutting down trees to fashion a landing area for helicopters.

The jetliner slammed into the dormant volcano at nearly 800 kilometers per hour during drizzle. Russian and French investigators have joined the investigation into the cause.

The Superjet 100 is Russia's first new model of passenger jet since the Soviet collapse and was intended to help resurrect its aeronautics industry.

The ill-fated Superjet was carrying representatives from local airlines and journalists on what was supposed to be a 50-minute demonstration flight. Just 21 minutes after takeoff from a Jakarta airfield, the Russian pilot and co-pilot asked for permission to drop from 3,000 meters to 1,800 meters. They gave no explanation, disappearing from the radar immediately afterward.

It was not clear why the crew asked to shift course, especially since they were so close to the 2,200-meter volcano, or whether they got an OK, officials say.

The crash investigation could take as many as 12 to 15 months, a representative of the National Committee for Transportation Safety in Indonesia told RIA-Novosti. Russia's Investigate Committee has opened a criminal investigation of safety violations in connection with the crash, the agency's spokesman Vladimir Markin said, Interfax reported.

"Researchers need to analyze the compliance of the aircraft-crew training procedures before the flight as part of a criminal case investigation, and to determine the technical condition of the plane before it left Russia," he said.

Aeroflot, which operates six Superjets, said it would not suspend operation of the plane. "All Superjets undergo daily technical inspections, and flights are going according to schedule," the airline said on Twitter.

Yekaterina Solovyova, an Aeroflot flight attendant, was fired for joking about the crash on her Twitter account.

"What, a Superjet crashed? Hahaha! Piece of crap! It's a pity it's not Aeroflot's, there would be one less and maybe they would even sell the rest back to someone," she wrote.

She later deleted both the comment and her account, but she was still fired from the company.

Aeroflot spokeswoman Irina Dannenberg told Vedomosti that the company found it impossible to work with a flight attendant who joked about the death of passengers and crew members.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/05/11/12-bodies-found-as-search-teams-reach-crash-site-a14661>