

Balloons helped divers retrieve AirAsia black box from debris

By Achmad Ibrahim
The Associated Press

PANGKALAN BUN, Indonesia — Search and rescue workers used balloons and other equipment to lift debris from the AirAsia plane wreckage to allow divers to retrieve the cockpit voice recorder, according to the search coordinator.

Divers recovered the flight data recorder January 12, but the second black box — which is actually orange — was pinned under chunks of the plane's wing at a depth of 105 feet in the Java Sea.

The divers could see the flight data recorder clearly as an orange object, but it was difficult to retrieve as layers of heavy metal and debris were above it," according to Suryadi Bambang Supriyadi, the operation coordinator for Indonesia's national search and rescue agency.

The two instruments, which emit signals from their beacons, are vital to understanding what brought Flight 8501 down on December 28, killing all 162 people on board. They should provide essential information about the plane and all of the conversations between the captain and co-pilot for the duration of the flight.

More than 80 Indonesian navy divers plunged into the shallow sea about 20 meters away from where the flight data recorder had been located, Supriyadi said. Workers prepared balloons and lifting bags to raise the debris, he said.

Supriyadi also said an Indonesian warship had found pieces of the plane's windows and interior cupboards near the Java port of Semarang, about 450 miles southeast of where the jet had lost contact with Indonesian air traffic control, showing how far some debris has drifted since the accident.

The flight data recorder has been taken to Jakarta, Indonesia's capital, for evaluation. Downloading and analysis of the information has already started, according to Nurcahyo Utomo, an investigator at the National Committee for Safety Transportation.



ROUGH RETRIEVAL. A member of the Indonesian Air Force holds the recovered cockpit voice recorder from the ill-fated AirAsia Flight 8501 during a press conference in Pangkalan Bun, Central Borneo, Indonesia. Divers hope to retrieve the crashed AirAsia plane's second black box from the bottom of the Java Sea to give experts essential tools to piece together what brought the jet down. (AP Photo)

Based on past crashes, the information retrieved from the black boxes could be vital. The two separate devices — designed to survive extreme heat and pressure — should provide investigators with a second-by-second timeline of the plane's flight.

The voice recorder takes audio feeds from four microphones within the cockpit and records all conversations between the pilots and air traffic controllers as well as any noises heard in the cockpit, including possible alarms or explosions. It records on a two-hour loop, so investigators won't just capture the plane's final minutes but the entire 42-minute trip.

The flight data recorder captures about 25 hours of information on the position and condition of almost every major part in a plane. It includes a multitude of data, including altitude, airspeed, direction, engine thrust, the rate of ascent or descent, and what angle up or down the plane was pointed.

"[There are] like 200-plus parameters they record," said aviation safety expert John Goglia, a former U.S. National Transportation Safety Board member. "It's going to provide

us an ocean of material."

The pilots of the AirAsia jet last had contact with air traffic controllers less than halfway into the two-hour flight from Surabaya, Indonesia's second-largest city, to Singapore. Saying they were entering a stormy area, they asked to climb from 32,000 feet to 38,000 feet to avoid threatening clouds, but were denied permission because of heavy air traffic. Four minutes later, the plane dropped off the radar. No distress signal was sent.

Searchers also located the main section of the plane's cabin, where many of the victims' bodies are believed to be entombed.

So far, only 50 bodies have been recovered. Decomposition is making identification more difficult for desperate families waiting to bury their loved ones. Nearly all of the passengers were Indonesian.

"I still believe many victims remain trapped there, and we must find them," said Gen. Moeldoko, Indonesia's military chief, who uses one name.

Associated Press writers Niniek Karmini in Jakarta, Indonesia, Scott Mayerowitz in New York, and Nicki Mayo in Washington contributed to this report.

Censors strike again as China bans bosoms in popular TV show

By Didi Tang
The Associated Press

BEIJING — At the end of December, a popular television series chronicling China's most famous empress suddenly went on a four-day hiatus. When it returned on New Year's Day, the low-cut necklines and squeezed bosoms had vanished.

Instead, the screen was filled with close-up shots showing only the heads of the female characters in the period piece, which depicts the seventh-century Tang Dynasty, an era when a woman's beauty was defined partly by plumpness.

No one has claimed responsibility for the awkward cropping, but it is widely believed to be the work of the country's prudish censors.

The changes have drawn a wave of mockery from a public that is fed up with ham-handed censorship. Chinese have lit up social media with complaints and jokes, with some posting cropped photos of celebrities and drawings that add in the missing



BOSOM BAN. A television, left, displays the original version of a popular drama next to a computer displaying the version that was re-edited, in Beijing, China. At the end of December, a popular television series chronicling China's most famous empress suddenly went on a four-day hiatus. When it returned on New Year's Day, the low-cut necklines and squeezed bosoms had vanished. Instead, the screen was filled with close-up shots showing only the heads of the female characters in the period piece, which depicts the seventh-century Tang Dynasty, an era when a woman's beauty was defined partly by plumpness. (AP Photo/Andy Wong)

cleavages to show the absurdity of the cuts.

"It was not a public issue, but has become one after shameless officials wielded their powerful administrative powers," Ren Zhiqiang, a busi-

nessman who has been outspoken on social issues, wrote on his microblog. "What people are concerned about is not cleavage, but that a bunch of cultural hooligans are in charge of

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