

Superjet Black Box Found

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Indonesian soldiers holding up the Superjet's shattered and badly burned cockpit voice recorder on Wednesday.

JAKARTA, Indonesia — Investigators on Wednesday were analyzing the cockpit voice recorder from the Superjet, which slammed into the side of an Indonesian volcano. They hope the final words of the two pilots will help explain what caused last week's crash, which killed all 45 people on board.

The black box, found Tuesday at the bottom of a 500-meter ravine, was shattered and badly burned, said Tatang Kurniadi, who heads the National Commission on Safety Transportation, adding that the memory module appears to still be readable.

It could take up to a week to download the audio, said Mardjono Siswosuwarno, the chief investigator, and it will then have to be translated and transcribed.

The Sukhoi Superjet 100 — Russia's first passenger jet model since the fall of the Soviet Union two decades ago — was being demonstrated for potential buyers when it roared into Mount Salak at 800 kilometers per hour and exploded on April 9.

Debris from the twin-engine jet rained down the near-vertical flank of the long-dormant volcano. It took days for search teams to find the black box partly because it was so badly charred and hidden in heavy brush, said Gagah Prakoso, a spokesman for the search and rescue agency.

He said the flight data recorder, which keeps track of instructions sent to any electronic systems on the aircraft, was still missing.

The Superjet — intended to help resurrect Russia's aeronautics industry — was on its fourth stop of a Welcome Asia! tour that was plagued pretty much from the get-go.

After a successful demo flight in Kazakhstan, the tour moved to Pakistan, where potential buyers were forced to look at the jet on the runway. One media report said it didn't take to the sky because of a technical glitch, but that could not be confirmed.

Then on the way to Myanmar, it was discovered that a "nozzle in the engine" was leaking, Alexander Tulyakov, vice president of United Aircraft Corporation, the main stockholder of Sukhoi, told Life News.

It got permission from the engine maker to return to Moscow.

A replacement jet — the one that crashed into the volcano — was then sent to the region to continue the ill-fated tour.

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