



SEARCH RESUMES FOR MISSING PLANE IN INDONESIA

News / Airlines



Indonesian authorities have resumed searching for an AviaStar [airline](#) Twin Otter turboprop aircraft with 10 people on board that went missing on Friday during a flight on Sulawesi island.

The aircraft lost contact with airport authorities on a flight from the town of Masamba about 30 minutes before it was scheduled to land in Makassar city.

The incident is in yet another blow to the beleaguered aviation industry in the archipelago.

Ferdinand Lumintintang, AviaStar's flight operations officer, said that rescuers were using signals from the pilot's and passengers' mobile phones on Friday night to try to locate the aircraft in a mountainous area.

The plane, a Twin Otter owned by AviaStar, an Indonesian domestic passenger airline based in East Jakarta, was carrying 10 people including three children.

Transportation Ministry spokesman Julius Barata said the plane was expected to land in

Makassar, the provincial capital of South Sulawesi, at about 3:40 p.m. Friday afternoon.

However he said it lost contact eleven minutes after it took off from Masamba, also in South Sulawesi, at 2:30 p.m. local time.

"We are still confirming the area where the flight went missing," Mr Julius said. The flight time from Masamba to Makassar should take 70 minutes.

Deputy chief of operations of the national search and rescue agency, Heronimus Guru, said all passengers and crew were Indonesian.

The agency, Basarnas, was combing the area.

Chief operations spokesman Deden Ridwansyah said Basarnas had sent a team from Bone and Palu to set up a tactical centre in Masamba.

"Since the lost contact happened not too long after take off, we believe the plane is still in the Masamba area. We are coordinating with local authorities to gather information such as if any locals saw the plane."

He said the weather was quite clear at the time but there was strong wind in the area.

Indonesia has a patchy aviation safety record and has had three major air crashes over the past year, including an AirAsia flight that went down in the sea on a flight from Surabaya to Singapore in late December, killing all 162 people aboard.

According to Aviation-safety.net, Aviastar has had four fatal incidents, including the crash of a British Aerospace 146-300 aircraft in the eastern province of Papua in 2009, killing all six crew on board.

In August, a passenger airliner crashed in Papua killing all 54 people aboard.

More than 100 people were killed in June in the crash of a military transport plane in the northern city of Medan, prompting the government to promise a review of the ageing air force fleet.

Struggling to cope with the expansion of air travel, Indonesia scored poorly on a 2014 safety audit by the UN aviation agency.

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