



**NINTH MEETING OF THE ASIA PACIFIC ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION
GROUP (APAC-AIG/9)**

(27-28 October 2021 on Virtual Platform at 11.00 hrs. Bangkok Time UTC+7)

Agenda Item 5: Regional cooperation

INVESTIGATION COOPERATION AMID COVID-19 PANDEMIC

(Presented by Singapore)

SUMMARY

This paper shares the experience of Singapore Transport Safety Investigation Bureau's participation in the investigation of the Sriwijaya Air Boeing 737-500 led by the Indonesia National Transportation Safety Committee and highlights the spirit of investigation cooperation in a major accident investigation during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 9 January 2021, a Sriwijaya Air Boeing B737-500 aircraft operating as Flight SY182 took off from Soekarno-Hatta International Airport, Jakarta, for Supadio International Airport (Pontianak). Radar contact with the aircraft was lost about five minutes after departure. The aircraft was eventually found to have crashed into the Java Sea. Two investigators from the Singapore Transport Safety Investigation Bureau (TSIB) travelled to Jakarta on 13 January 2021 to participate in the investigation led by the Indonesia National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC).

1.2 This paper shares the experience on the coordination among various agencies in overcoming the travel restrictions arising from COVID-19 pandemic and the investigation cooperation among the investigation agencies.

2. DISCUSSION

Arrangement for deployment

2.1 Given the COVID-19 situation, the Indonesian authorities required that foreigners entering Indonesia must:

- have a valid visa to enter Indonesia,
- have undergone a Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) swab test within 48 hours prior to departure from Singapore; and
- serve a 5-day quarantine order after arrival in Indonesia.

2.2 Prior to the deployment, the TSIB contacted the Indonesia Embassy through the Singapore Ministry of Foreign Affairs for assistance in visa approval and a waiver of the quarantine order for the TSIB investigators. Due to various uncertainties, such as the availability of flight and time taken for the PCR result, it was a challenge to time the PCR test to ensure that the test result was still valid at the time of departure from Singapore.

2.3 Over in Jakarta, the NTSC coordinated the Indonesian foreign and health agencies to facilitate the entry of the TSIB team into Indonesia. Thanks to the NTSC's support, the TSIB team was exempted from having to serve the quarantine order and was able to join the NTSC's investigation activities soon after the team's arrival in Jakarta. The TSIB team was also met by colleagues from the NTSC upon arrival at the Jakarta airport who helped facilitate a smooth clearance at the Customs and Immigration Checkpoint.

2.4 During their deployment in Indonesia, the TSIB team had to abide by the following safe distancing measures:

- maintaining distancing in meetings
- ensuring personal hygiene like frequent washing of hands
- wearing of masks at all times except when eating/drinking
- restricting movements to between hotels, sites and NTSC office

Investigation Activities

2.5 The flight data recorder (FDR) was recovered on 12 January 2021, before the TSIB's deployment. The TSIB team worked alongside investigators from NTSC and the US National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), Boeing and General Electric for about 17 days and were involved in the following activities:

- data extraction from damaged FDR
- examination of wreckage recovered from the sea
- search planning discussions for locating the cockpit voice recorder (CVR)

2.6 The TSIB team also participated in the daily investigation meetings. After returning to Singapore, the team continued to work with the NTSC through periodic updates and discussions on a virtual platform.

Lessons Learnt

2.7 The TSIB greatly appreciates the opportunity to participate in the NTSC's investigation and learn about the following:

- Resources needed, methods used and difficulties encountered in the locating and recovery of a CVR (with its underwater locator beacon detached)
- Investigative techniques in the areas of aircraft maintenance and flight operations

2.8 In addition, the deployment offered a great opportunity for the TSIB to validate its contingency plan for overseas deployment during the COVID-19 pandemic in terms of the following:

- having adequate supply of personal protective equipment such as sanitisers, surgical masks and gloves
- coordinating with the relevant agencies, both local and foreign, to facilitate for immediate travel
- coordinating with the NTSC to allow immediate participation in investigation activities upon arrival

2.9 The deployment also shows that, with good planning and coordination, it is possible for an overseas deployment for investigation to be carried out swiftly and safely.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) encourage States/Administrations to have a contingency plan for deployment of investigators amid a pandemic situation;
- b) encourage States/Administrations to make arrangements for the relevant local authorities to facilitate entry of foreign investigators amid a pandemic situation;
- c) note the value of investigation cooperation and sharing of knowledge among States/Administrations; and
- d) encourage States/Administrations to welcome investigators from other States/Administrations to participate in their investigations.

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