



International Civil Aviation Organization

**Third Meeting of the Asia Pacific Accident Investigation Group
(APAC-AIG/3)**

(Colombo, Sri Lanka, 23 - 24 June 2015)

Agenda Item 6: Regional Cooperation

SHARING OF EXPERIENCE FROM A RECENT SEA SEARCH OPERATION

(Presented by Indonesia and Singapore)

SUMMARY

This paper highlights the lessons learnt and coordination of a recent sea search operation that was led by the Indonesia National Transportation Safety Committee.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 On 28 Dec 14, radar contact with an AirAsia Indonesia A320 aircraft operating flight QZ8501 was lost. The Indonesia National Transportation Safety Committee (NTSC), as Indonesia's transport accident investigation authority, coordinated the sea search effort to locate and recover the flight recorders of the aircraft.

2. DISCUSSION

2.1 The sea search effort to recover the flight recorders was carried out by the NTSC while the search and rescue (SAR) operation, led by the Indonesia National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS), was ongoing. All coordination between the underwater search team and the BASARNAS and other agencies that provided support was handled the NTSC.

2.2 The manpower available for the underwater search team was as follows:

Organisation	Country	Personnel
National Transportation Safety Committee	Indonesia	1 adviser to Chairman, 2 investigators
Bureau d'Enquêtes et d'Analyses pour la sécurité de l'aviation civile (BEA)	France	1 investigator
Air Accidents Investigation Branch (UK AAIB)	United Kingdom	1 investigator
Civil Aviation Administration of China (CAAC)	China	3 investigators
Air Accident Investigation Bureau of Singapore (AAIB)	Singapore	4 investigators
Maritime Port Authority of Singapore (MPA)	Singapore	6 specialists

- 2.3 The underwater search team was also supported by NTSC and BEA investigators who were stationed on shore to provide technical advice and logistic support to the team.
- 2.4 The Directorate-General of Sea Transportation (DGST) of Indonesia provided the two vessels, together with the required operating crew, which the underwater search team operated from.
- 2.5 Forty-five divers from the Indonesian navy performed dive operations to retrieve the flight recorders.
- 2.6 The BASARNAS, which spearheaded the SAR effort, received valuable support from China, Japan, Malaysia, Russia, Singapore, South Korea and the United States. The BASARNAS managed its own resources together with those from these foreign countries, the Indonesian military and the provincial government to conduct the SAR.
- 2.7 On the investigation front, the NTSC received support from Australia, China, France, Russia, Singapore and United Kingdom during the sea search phase and readout of the flight recorders.
- 2.8 For France, the BEA investigators participated and assisted as the State of Design and Manufacture in line with ICAO Annex 13.
- 2.9 AAIB Singapore and UK AAIB offered their assistance for the search of the flight recorders directly to the Chairman of the NTSC shortly after receiving news of the missing aircraft. Australia offered to the Chairman of the NTSC to provide a recorder specialist to assist in the readout of the recorder performed in the NTSC laboratory.
- 2.10 The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia was contacted by China and Russia who offered their assistance for the search of the flight recorders and to support the search and rescue effort respectively.
- 2.11 Despite the offers for assistance coming in from various channels, the NTSC coordinated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Indonesia for the necessary diplomatic clearance granted for the foreign participants.
- 2.12 In the case of the AAIB-MPA team, the NTSC also facilitated in the smooth clearance of the large amount of equipment through the customs as the team arrived in Belitung.
- 2.13 Knowing that the foreign participants may not be conversant with the local language, the NTSC ensured that there was always one NTSC personnel assigned to each group of foreign participants to facilitate as a translator and the coordinator with its HQ.
- 2.14 While out the sea, the underwater search team was able to focus fully on the task of detecting and localising the ULB ping signal. For all other matters, in particular the request for more divers, the NTSC personnel on board the ships assisted in the coordination.
- 2.15 The successful multinational effort in retrieving and readout of the flight recorders underlined the importance of the close relation which NTSC enjoys with its foreign counterparts.
- 2.16 One of the avenues to develop such relations is through attending accident investigation related events such as the International Society of Air Safety Investigator (ISASI) seminars (and those of the regional chapter of AsiaSASI) or ICAO accident investigation meetings. As for the Asia and Pacific regions, there was a Code of Conduct developed to foster a cooperative spirit on accident investigation related matters. Within the Southeast Asia region, a memorandum of understanding was developed and agreed upon in 2008 by the governments to pledge their commitment for mutual assistance during an investigation into an accident.

2.17 Clearly, it is important for such close relations to be developed before a crisis happens.

2.18 Even if an individual agency has the capability to perform underwater search for flight recorders, it is still beneficial to accept the offer of assistance by other foreign agencies for greater efficiency while searching for the flight recorders. The key challenge in this would be to coordinate all the available resources and assistance rendered by the foreign counterparts to conduct a successful sea search.

3. ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The Meeting is invited to:

- a) Note the importance of good networking and close regional cooperation during peace time as these can become very useful in a crisis; and
- b) Encourage States/Administrations that have not yet done so to consider subscribing to the Code of Conduct.

— END —