

Divers Find Large Tail Section From Air France Jet

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RECIFE, Brazil (AP) — Brazilian divers found a large tail section from an Air France jet on Monday, one of the biggest pieces yet recovered from wreckage that is helping narrow the search for Flight 447's black boxes. A U.S. Navy team is bringing in high-tech underwater listening devices to detect pings from the data and voice recorders.

Brazilian and French military ships that have so far recovered 16 bodies and large amounts of plane wreckage searched amid a sea of floating debris, finding the tail section with Air France's trademark red and blue stripes.

Brazilian military officials reduced the number of recovered bodies from the 17 announced Sunday, saying there had been a counting error.

What caused the Airbus A330 to crash May 31 with 228 people on board will remain a mystery unless searchers can locate the plane's black box flight data and voice recorders, likely buried deep in the middle of the ocean.

Two U.S. Navy devices that can detect emergency beacons to a depth of 20,000 feet (6,100 meters) are being flown to Brazil with a Navy team, according to the Pentagon. They will be delivered to ships that will then listen for transmissions from the black boxes, which are programmed to emit signals for at least 30 days.

Sixteen bodies were recovered Saturday and Sunday about 45 miles (70 kilometers) from where the jet sent out messages signaling electrical failures and loss of cabin pressure.

Authorities also announced that searchers spotted two airplane seats and debris with Air France's logo, and recovered dozens of structural components from the plane. They had already recovered jet wing fragments, and said hundreds of personal items believed to from passengers were plucked from the water.

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said his nation's military would do all it can to retrieve bodies and return them to relatives.

"We know how significant it is for a family to recover their loved one," Silva said Monday on his weekly radio show. He added: "During this painful time it's not going to resolve the problem, but it is an immense comfort to know they can bury their loved ones."

France is leading the investigation into the cause of the crash, while Brazilian officials are focusing on the recovery of victims and wreckage from Flight 447,

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which likely broke up in midair in turbulent weather the night of May 31 en route from Rio de Janeiro to Paris.

French military spokesman Christophe Prazuck said the nuclear attack submarine Emeraude would arrive at the scene later this week and "will try to find the acoustic pings emitted by the black box."

The Ventose, a French military frigate, arrived Sunday and is now under Brazil command, Prazuck said. That ship has found and brought aboard seven of the 17 bodies of victims discovered so far, and about 30 pieces of debris that "most probably come from the plane," Prazuck said.

A French navy ship, the Mistral, is headed to the site, he said, and the oceanographic survey ship Pourquoi Pas, equipped with deep-water unmanned subs, is also en route and will try to retrieve the black box.

The search is focusing on a zone of several hundred square miles (square kilometers) roughly 400 miles (640 kilometers) northeast of the Fernando de Noronha islands off Brazil's northern coast.

Brazilian authorities have refused to release the precise coordinates of where they are looking, except to say the area lies southeast of the last jet transmission and could have indicated the pilot was trying to turn around in mid-flight and head back to the islands.

The investigation is increasingly focused on whether external instruments on the Airbus A330 may have iced over, confusing speed sensors and leading computers to set the plane's speed too fast or slow — a potentially deadly mistake.

The French agency investigating the disaster said airspeed instruments on the plane had not been replaced as the maker had recommended, but cautioned that it was too early to draw conclusions about what role that may have played in the crash.

The agency, BEA, said the plane received inconsistent airspeed readings from different instruments as it struggled in a massive thunderstorm.

Munhoz and Brazilian Navy Capt. Giucemar Tabosa Cardoso declined to comment on the condition of the bodies, saying that information would be too emotionally painful for relatives.

Neither would authorities immediately identify hundreds of personal items that have been recovered. Relatives of the victims were devastated by an announcement Saturday that a laptop computer and briefcase containing a plane ticket had been found.

"We don't want to cause them more suffering," Munhoz said.

The bodies and plane wreckage were being transported by Brazilian and French

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ships and should arrive Tuesday at the Fernando de Noronha islands, where the military has set up a staging post for the search operation. From there, remains and debris will be taken to the northeastern coastal city of Recife for identification.

Meanwhile, friends and family remembered geologist Michael Prince Harris and his wife, Anne Debaillon Harris — the only U.S. citizens on the plane — in a memorial service Sunday in Lafayette, Louisiana.

The couple had lived in Lafayette before moving to Houston and then Brazil.

The Pentagon has said there are no signs that terrorism was involved in the crash. French officials have also said there are no signs, but that terrorism has not been ruled out. Brazil's defense minister said the possibility wasn't considered.

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