

Safety Investigation into the accident to the Airbus A330-203, registered F-GZCP flight AF 447, on 1st June 2009

During the night of Sunday 31 May to Monday 1st June 2009, the Airbus A330-203 registered F-GZCP operated by Air France crashed into the Atlantic Ocean. The aeroplane had taken off at 22 h 29 to undertake scheduled flight AF 447 between Rio de Janeiro Galeão and Paris Charles de Gaulle. 12 crew members (3 flight crew, 9 cabin crew) and 216 passengers, from thirty-two nationalities, were on board. The last radio communication between the crew and the Brazilian ATC took place at 1 h 35. Between 2 h 10 and 2 h 15, a position message and 24 maintenance messages were transmitted by the ACARS system. On Monday 1st June 2009 at around 7 h 45, the BEA was alerted by the Air France Operations Coordination Centre.

Chronology

- 1 June 2009: Search and Rescue (SAR) operations launched and coordinated by the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre (MRCC) in Recife (Brazil). Safety investigation launched.
- 6 - 18 June 2009: the remains of fifty victims and some aeroplane parts were found by French and Brazilian naval forces.
- 10 June - 10 July 2009: undersea searches to detect signals transmitted by the two flight recorders' emergency locator beacons.
- 2 July 2009: publication of the first BEA Interim Report.
- 27 July - 17 August 2009: undersea searches with side-scan sonar and a Remotely Operated Vehicle (ROV) to locate the site of the aeroplane wreckage.
- 17 December 2009: publication of the second BEA Interim Report.
- September 2009 - January 2010: preparatory work by an international working group for the third campaign of sea searches for the aeroplane wreckage.
- 2 April - 24 May 2010: third campaign of undersea searches.
- June 2010 - February 2011: analysis of all of the data gathered during the three previous undersea search campaigns in order to define a new strategy.
- 25 March 2011: beginning of the fourth campaign of undersea searches.
- 2 April 2011: discovery of the aeroplane wreckage at a depth of 3,900 metres, about 6.5 NM north of the last known aeroplane position.
- 26 April 2011 - 13 May 2011: beginning of the fifth campaign of undersea searches. The BEA team, made up of twelve investigators and experts, devoted itself to the localisation and recovery of the flight recorders, to mapping the accident site, then to recovering the aeroplane parts that were useful to the safety investigation.
- 1 May 2011: discovery of the Flight Data Recorder (FDR).
- 2 May 2011: recovery of the Flight Data Recorder (FDR).
- 3 May 2011: discovery and recovery of the Cockpit Voice Recorder (CVR).
- 13 May 2011: beginning of the readout and analysis of the flight recorders at the BEA headquarters.
- 21 May - 3 June 2011: continuation of undersea operations. The ship and equipment made available by the BEA to representatives of the judicial authorities, which made it possible for them to recover the remains of one hundred and three victims.
- 29 July 2011: publication of the third BEA Interim Report.
- Beginning September - end December 2011: analysis of all aspects linked to the conduct of the flight by the "Human Factors" working group.
- 5 July 2012: publication of the Safety Investigation Final Report.