RESCUERS SAY WRECKAGE OF MISSING INDONESIAN PLANE IS FOUND

News / Airlines

Indonesian rescuers said Monday they have found the wreckage of a small plane carrying 10 people that went missing on a domestic flight three days ago.

The DHC-6 Twin Otter plane lost contact with air traffic controllers 11 minutes after taking off in good weather Friday from Masamba in South Sulawesi province.

National Search and Rescue Agency chief Henry Bambang Soelistyo said the wreckage was found Monday in a forest in a mountainous area of Luwu District.

The turboprop plane, owned by the airline Aviastar Mandiri, was on a flight to Makassar, the provincial capital, carrying three crew members and seven passengers, including three children. No distress signal was received.

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"The plane has been discovered along with a number of victims," Soelistyo said.

Luwu police chief Lt. Col. Adex Yudiswan, who led a 38-member team that reached the crash site near Gamaru village, said the wreckage was scattered and some parts were still burning.

"We found three bodies - a child and two adults, and all were burnt," Yudisman told private TVOne station in an interview. "Because of the dusk, we will return tomorrow to search for other victims and as well as the black boxes."

Six aircraft and four patrol boats had been searching for a plane, focusing on the sea between the two southern peninsulas of Sulawesi Island.

Search efforts were hindered over the weekend by bad weather and rough terrain, Soelistyo said.

The 1981 Canadian-made plane was acquired by Aviastar in January 2014 and underwent its most recent maintenance on Sep. 15.

Indonesia, a sprawling archipelago nation of about 250 million people, has been plagued by transportation accidents in recent years, including plane and train crashes and ferry sinkings. It is one of Asia's most rapidly expanding airline markets, but is struggling to obtain qualified pilots, mechanics, air traffic controllers and modern airport technology.

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