SEARCH BEGINS FOR MISSING INDONESIAN AIRCRAFT

News / Airlines

Indonesian authorities have launched a search for an Aviastar Twin Otter turboprop aircraft with 10 people on board that went missing on a domestic flight on Sulawesi island.

The Transport Ministry said a search has begun for the aircraft that lost contact on a flight from the town of Masamba, about 30 minutes before its was scheduled to land in Makassar city.

"It was around 60 nautical miles from Makassar," ministry spokesman J.R. Barata told MetroTV. "We have now started a search."

"Most importantly, we will work out its position first," Barata said adding that 10 people - seven passengers and three crew - were on board.

Aviastar, which flies domestic routes, said it had lost contact with the aircraft mid-afternoon and had then contacted search authorities.

Indonesia has a patchy aviation safety record and has had three major air crashes over the past

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year, including an AirAsia flight that went down in the sea on a flight from Bali to Singapore in late December, killing all 162 people aboard.

According to Aviation-safety.net, Aviastar has had four fatal incidents, including the crash of a BAe 146-300 aircraft in the eastern province of Papua in 2009, killing all six crew on board.

In August, a passenger airliner crashed in Papua killing all 54 people aboard.

More than 100 people were killed in June in the crash of a military transport plane in the northern city of Medan, prompting the government to promise a review of the air force fleet.

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