



France's flight accident investigation bureau has indicated that pilot error may have played a part in the crash of an Air France flight from Rio de Janeiro to Paris two years ago. The Airbus A330 fell more than 35,000 feet into the Atlantic ocean, killing all 228 on board. This report is from Hugh Schofield.

This is not the final report into the causes of the crash, but with the new evidence from the flight recorders, it's the most **substantial analysis** to date - and what's new is **a clear signal** from the investigators that **pilot error** may have been partly to blame.

The initial problem it's now certain was the failure of outside **speed monitors**, which froze over. But in response to that, the bureau says, the three man crew failed to take the correct steps.

The 32 year-old co-pilot who was at the controls kept the plane on **an upward trajectory**, which caused the plane **to stall**. But even though a warning then sounded for nearly a minute, at no point, says the report, did the crew formally identify a stall situation.

No announcement was made to the passengers as the plane then **plunged** for three and a half minutes before hitting the sea.

The shifting of blame towards the pilots - and **by implication** away from the machinery of the plane - is a highly sensitive matter, and Air France has already reacted angrily.

It says there's no cause to question the professionalism of its crew, and **pointing the finger at** the manufacturer, Airbus, it says that confusing signals from the stall alarm system in the cockpit **hindered** the pilots in their task of analysing the crisis.

Hugh Schofield, BBC News

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Vocabulary and definitions

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| substantial analysis | thorough examination of the cause |
| pilot error | mistakes by the people flying the plane |
| speed monitors | equipment which measures how fast the plane is travelling |
| an upward trajectory | a curved path going higher |
| to stall | to stop flying forward and begin to lose height because there is not enough speed for the wings to keep the plane in the air |
| plunged | fell suddenly from a great height |
| the shifting of blame | the moving of responsibility |
| by implication | by suggestion |
| pointing the finger at | suggesting the blame lay with |
| hindered | limited the ability of |