

What happened to Flight QZ8501

The Airbus A320-200 had a faulty component – the Rudder Travel Limiter (RTL) which helps control the plane's rudder movement, limiting how much it can roll to no more than 33 degrees. Here's what happened about 25 minutes after the plane took off from Surabaya.



- The RTL sends four “master cautions” or warning indicators to the pilots.
- The crew resolves the issue the first three times but on the fourth, the pilots try to reset the RTL system.
- One or both pilots apparently removes and re-inserts circuit breakers to the flight computers.
- This leads to a power cut and the autopilot turns off.



- The rudder turns 2 degrees left, sending the aircraft into a 54 degree roll.
- The pilots try desperately to regain control of the aircraft.
- The plane's black box indicates possible confusion between the pilot and co-pilot. At one point the pilot says “pull down,” but the plane continued to ascend.
- The crew never regains control of the aircraft which goes into a “prolonged stall”.



- The plane crashes into the Java Sea.