



JAKARTA LIMITS FLIGHTS OVER SAFETY CONCERNS

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Indonesia will cut the number of flights allowed per hour from **Jakarta's** main Soekarno-Hatta Airport due to **safety concerns**, following a series of major crashes that have killed more than 300 in the last year.

Indonesian airports have struggled to cope with the huge expansion of air travel in Southeast Asia's largest economy, getting poor marks in a 2014 ICAO safety audit due to insufficient staffing.

To help ease the work load on air traffic controllers at the airport, traffic will be limited to 62 take-offs and landings an hour, down from around 72 at peak hours currently, said Muzaffar Ismail, director for aircraft operations at the transport ministry.

"With the high frequency of flights, there is a greater risk of collisions and accidents," Ismail said.

The changes were not expected to lead to a reduction in the number of take-offs and landings per day, as more flights would be scheduled for off-peak hours to meet the new capacity requirements. Haze from slash-and-burn forest fires was not mentioned as a safety concern.

Experts questioned how reducing the number of flights would actually fix Indonesia's air safety problems.

"If 72 flights an hour was not safe, then why did they approve it in the first place?" said Jakarta-based aviation consultant Gerry Soejatman.

"It seems to be an overreaction. Instead of mitigating the risk, they seem to be avoiding the risk."

Indonesia has a poor aviation safety record, with four major crashes in less than a year.

In December, an AirAsia flight went down in the Java Sea, killing all 162 on board. More than 120 people died in June in the crash of a military transport plane, while all 54 on board a Trigana Air aircraft died in a crash in Papua in August.

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