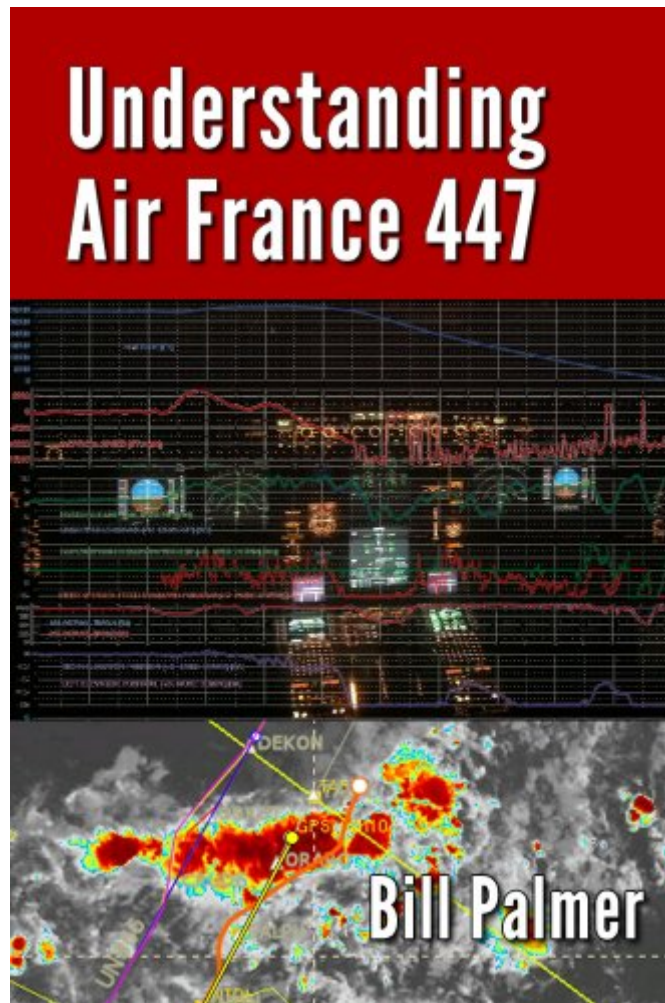




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Understanding Air France 447



Synopsis

The most comprehensive coverage to date of Air France 447, an Airbus A330 that crashed in the ocean north of Brazil on June 1, 2009, killing all 228 persons on board. Written by A330 Captain, Bill Palmer, this book opens to understanding the actions of the crew, how they failed to understand and control the problem, and how the airplane works and the part it played. All in easy to understand terms. Addressed are the many contributing aspects of weather, human factors, and airplane system operation and design that the crew could not recover from. How each contributed is covered in detail along with what has been done, and needs to be done in the future to prevent this from happening again. Also see the book's companion website: UnderstandingAF447.com for supplemental materials referred to in the book or to contact the author.

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Customer Reviews

I fly the A330, the author was one of my simulator instructors when I checked out 7 years ago. Capt Palmer wrote our operating manual for the A330, and writes an excellent analysis of this accident. This book is a must read for any Airbus pilot or anyone wishing to understand more about this

accident.

An easy, fast paced, but highly informative piece of analysis of the Air France 447 crash. It is so well written that is one need not be aviation professional to understand most of the analysis. However, ATP rated pilots, especially those who fly A320 and A330 series aircraft, will find it the most informative. Bill Palmer expertly debunks a few myths about AF447, while also providing some insight in what can be done to prevent such "pilot-error" related accidents again. He examines why the pilots erred and also speculates what might have lead to their mishandling of a critical situation. I promise will learn something from his analysis that will make you a better professional pilot. This was recommended as essential reading when I became a Captain on an Airbus for a U.S. Airline and I am recommending the same to anyone reading this review.

An Incredibly Insightful Look into a Tragically Avoidable Accident I recently had the pleasure of co-authoring, with Captain Bill Palmer, an analysis of the AirAsia 8501 accident for Airways Magazine (April, 2016 issue.) During my end of the research, I read his seminal work, "Understanding Air France 447." I was struck by Captain Palmer's depth of knowledge, exhaustive research and, most of all, his innate ability to explain an extremely complex situation to a general audience. As one reader put it, the book reads like a thriller, a horror novel, and a technical manual, all wrapped into one. What's more, several aspects of the AF447 accident bear striking similarities to the 12/2014 AirAsia A320 accident as well. Written for a general audience but equally accessible to the general aviation pilot and experienced Airbus pilot alike, Captain Palmer draws many important lessons from the both the accident and investigation itself. While many critics of the Airbus fleet of aircraft dismiss the accident as design flaw, Captain Palmer digs much deeper. The design aspects that critics pan, he notes, are the very same ones that have helped to garner the Airbus its incredible safety record. Taking it a step further, Captain Palmer examines the human element as well as training aspects that all may have been contributing factors in the tragedy. More importantly, he draws crucial lessons from these issues, and details a list of suggestions for improvements. Airlines and the aviation industry would do well to heed his advice. Captain Palmer's online companion to the book, at <http://understandingaf447.com>, goes even further in-depth into both the Airbus systems and the accident itself. Moreover, it includes a Glossary of terms, graphics, key parameters and a list of links for further reading on the accident. Any aviation buff or pilot—airline, GA, armchair or otherwise—would do well to read this fascinating study of this tragic, and avoidable, airline accident.

This is definitely the most comprehensive and updated analysis of the events leading to the crash of AF 447. It has one bias, which in a way also explains a lot about this accident, since the author himself is a A330 captain with extensive experience. For a traditional stick-and-rudder-oriented pilot, reading this book is a real eye opener. It becomes clear just how systems-oriented flying the Airbus is in comparison; the pilots don't really fly the airplane, they make command inputs to the system, which then flies the plane according to various protocols called "laws". This is not bad; on the contrary, given the amazing overall safety record of current commercial aviation, spectacular individual crashes notwithstanding, computers are better pilots. However, there can be no question that in this case the absence of a direct tactile connection between pilot input and what the co-pilot flying was asking the plane to do via the system killed 228 people. In plain English, the harder you pull back on the stick, the more strength is traditionally required, a self-limiting effect that is missing on the Airbus. The focus on the systems rather than on the airplane becomes obvious in the discussion of what to a traditional pilot should be the most interesting question: Once stalled and falling, was the plane recoverable? Tellingly, the author never discusses the aerodynamics of the stall in depth, doesn't address (and actually doesn't seem to be aware of) the vital distinction between a full stall, which would have been recoverable with standard stall recovery techniques, and a deep stall, in which the airflow over the control surfaces is disrupted to a point where standard recovery techniques are not effective any more. His analysis indicates to me, by the way, that it was only a full stall, not a deep stall, and could have been recovered, always assuming sufficient altitude left, since the aircraft did apparently respond correctly at those moments when the other First Officer tried to lower the nose, indicating elevator effectiveness, and also responded to aileron inputs. The author's whole discussion of this question basically consists of some remarks about how he had conversations with Airbus test pilots about whether the Airbus could have been recovered after the descent had started and how they were doubtful, and then he returns to his beloved systems. Again, this is no so much meant as criticism, but it shows a new mindset, one that's focused on the systems, not the plane, and one that works very well most of the time, but leaves pilots at a loss in a situation like AF 447, not because it's too difficult, but because it's too simple. Captain Palmer's helped me really understand for the first time how an experienced airline pilot could for minutes persist in an elementary mistake that would embarrass a student pilot in a Cessna after a handful of lessons.

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