



July 2026

Appeal trial for the Rio-Paris flight crash: the criminal liability of aviation stakeholders at the heart of a landmark legal case.

On 1 June 2009, Air France flight AF447 from Rio de Janeiro to Paris crashed into the Atlantic Ocean, killing all 228 people on board. Seventeen years after the events, the appeal proceedings represent a major step in determining criminal liability in connection with one of the most serious air disasters in French aviation history. Beyond the technical causes of the accident, the proceedings focus on the alleged shortcomings attributable to Air France and Airbus regarding the management of Pitot tube failures, the information provided to crews and their training in situations involving the loss of airspeed indications.



Investigation

- A judicial investigation was opened in June 2009 into involuntary manslaughter.
- The investigation established that the Airbus A330 lost control while flying through an area of unstable weather conditions, following the icing of the Pitot tubes, which resulted in the loss of available airspeed information for the crew.
- March 2011: **Airbus and Air France** were placed under formal investigation for **involuntary manslaughter**.



Trial

- October 2022: opening of the first-instance trial before the Paris Criminal Court.
- April 2023: acquittal of Airbus and Air France at first instance. The prosecution had indicated that it was unable to seek a conviction, in the absence of proof of a sufficiently established causal link.
- Appeal lodged by the Paris Prosecutor General's Office against the acquittal decision.
- November 2025: appeal hearing before the Paris Court of Appeal.



Sentencing

May 2026

- Conviction of Air France and Airbus for involuntary manslaughter, with the Paris Court of Appeal finding that the two companies bore criminal responsibility due to **shortcomings in crew training** regarding Pitot tube icing situations, as well as an **underestimation of the seriousness of failures affecting these systems**, which contributed to the occurrence of the accident.



Upcoming legal proceedings

Appeal to the Court of Cassation.



Impacts

- **Major reversal in the prosecution's position on appeal.**
- **Historic criminal conviction of Air France and Airbus nearly seventeen years after one of the deadliest air disasters in recent French aviation history.**