Ashes Over the Southwest was a dissertation written in fulfillment of an interdisciplinary PhD between the English and Journalism departments at the University of Oklahoma. The key areas of concentration within the departments were Creative and Professional Writing respectively. This dissertation is a creative work consisting of a body of original pieces (a collection of poetry) preceded by a critical introduction. The introduction is, basically, a collection of critical essays covering the topics of: (1) my key influences; (2) the problems with academic language; (3) the current state of poetry in America; (4) current issues in teaching; and (5) a discussion on the very un-postmodern topics of "passion and place" and issues with regionalism. The body is a collection of poems written over a three year period that centers in and around the life and culture of the southwestern states of Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado, and New Mexico. Chapter 1 Among the Okie Detritus, Chapter 2 City of Holy Faith, Chapter 3 Texas Almost Touches Colorado, Chapter 4 Odes to Nothin Bodeswell, Chapter 5 Reunion, Chapter 6 Psalms. The first three chapters are very regional in nature. They describe the people, places, and flavors of this unique geography in the southern half United States. The fourth chapter is a "quasi" autobiographical stab at the various key stages of growing up in this region. The fifth chapter is a small, but potent, collection of poems that deal with my experiences attending a twentieth high school reunion. The final chapter covers my struggle with growing up a considerably liberal preacher's kid in the buckle of the Bible Belt. It portrays a deep struggle with faith, spirituality, and religion as well as how those three things do not necessarily go together. The poetry (the main body of the dissertation) is intended to be a collection for publication.
Volcanic ash poses a deadly threat to aircraft, and ash from Agung is moving south-southwest toward the airport. Ash has reached a height of about 30,000 feet as it drifts across the island. “I don’t know, we can’t change it,” said stranded German tourist Gina Camp, sitting on a bench at the airport. “It’s the nature and we have to wait until it’s over.” She decided to look on the bright side, saying she planned to go back outside to enjoy another day on the island. Indonesia’s National Disaster Mitigation Agency raised the volcano’s alert to the highest level Monday and expanded an exclusion