

Earhart team says possible plane debris sighted

August 21 2012



American aviator Amelia Earhart sits at the controls of her plane in the 1930s. Researchers trying to unravel the mystery surrounding the 1937 disappearance of Earhart in the Pacific have said they spotted debris under water that may have come from her plane.

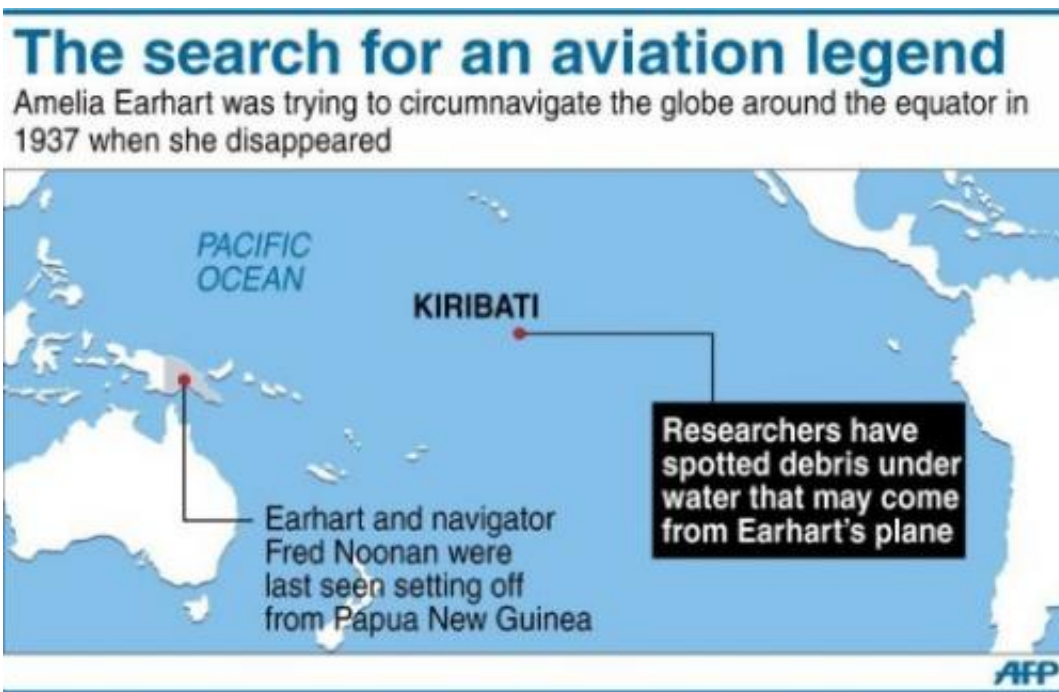
Researchers trying to unravel the mystery surrounding the 1937 disappearance of US aviator Amelia Earhart in the Pacific have said they

spotted debris under water that may have come from her plane.

High-definition video taken by a Project Earhart team and analyzed in a laboratory show "man-made objects" scattered west of Kiribati's Nikumaroro Island, said The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery (TIGHAR).

The expedition -- the 10th in 23 years -- in July filmed the [seabed](#) near the island, where they think Earhart may have made an [emergency landing](#) and lived for a short time during a bid to circumnavigate the globe along the [equator](#).

"We see elements in the underwater photos that are consistent with pieces of landing gear," TIGHAR director Richard Gillespie told AFP, noting his team spotted something that could have been a tire.



Graphic on the 1937 disappearance of US aviator Amelia Earhart in the Pacific. Researchers have spotted debris under water that may have come from her plane.

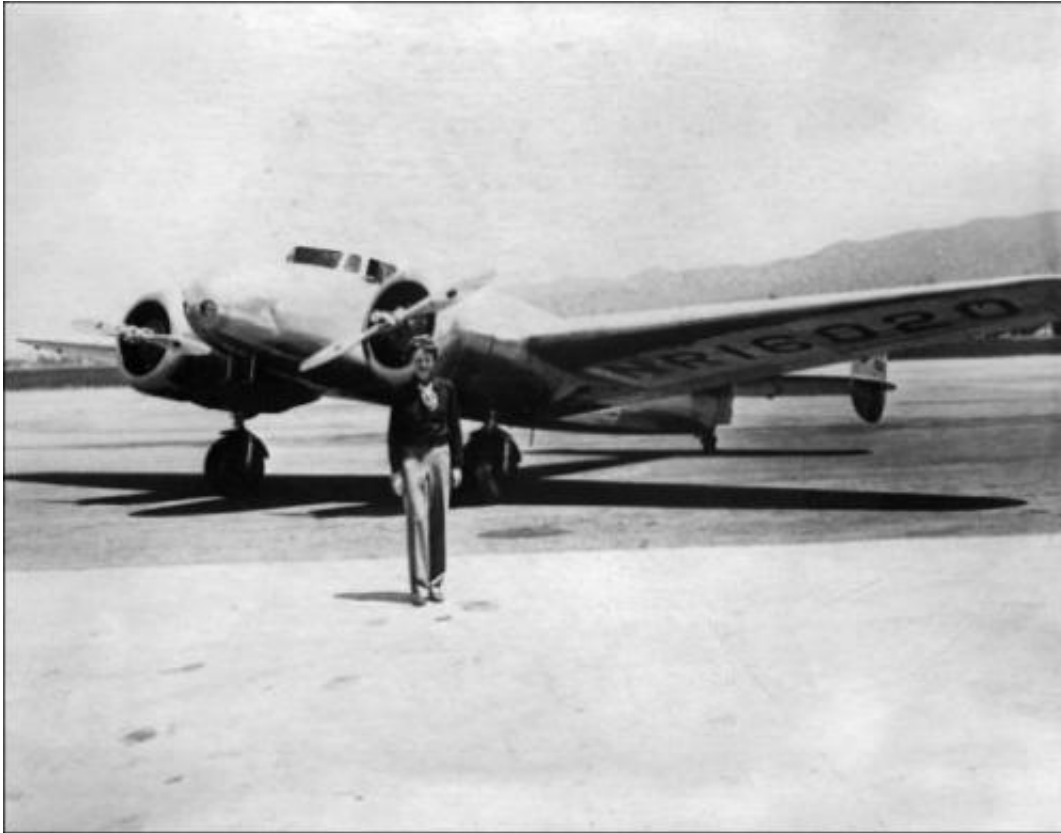
"This is a promising development," Gillespie said.

"We need to do much more analysis... We haven't claimed to solve the mystery with this. It's the next step in the investigation."

The location of the [debris](#) is promising, Gillespie said, as it is consistent with previous findings.

"It's in the right place. Whether it's the right stuff, the right material, we don't yet know," he said, adding: "If it's airplane debris, it's almost certainly related to Amelia. There is no other aircraft missing out there."

On July 2, 1937, Earhart, 39, accompanied by navigator Fred Noonan, embarked on the final stretch of her world tour in a twin-engine Lockheed Electra, heading for California from [Papua New Guinea](#).



American aviator Amelia Earhart stands in front of her plane. Earhart was the first woman to fly the Atlantic as a passenger, in 1928, and followed this by a solo flight in 1932. In 1935 she flew solo from Hawaii to California. In 1937, with Fred Noonan, they set out to fly round the world, but their plane was lost over the Pacific.

Earhart planned to land on Howland Island to refuel, but a few hours after [takeoff](#), she announced in a final radio message that she could not locate the island, and that her fuel was dwindling.

Despite numerous searches, no trace of her aircraft has been found to date.

A new Earhart expedition may take place in the next two years, if further analysis is promising, Gillespie said.

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