

Malaysia assessing possible plane wreckage claim (Update)

April 29 2014



In this aerial photo taken April 29, 2014 provided by the Australia Defence Force, multinational air-crew and aircraft involved in operation "Southern Indian Ocean" are assembled for a photo at RAAF Base Pearce, in Perth, Western Australia. Seven nations, including Australia, New Zealand, the U.S., South Korea, Malaysia, China and Japan, have flew daily search mission out to the southern Indian Ocean in the massive multinational hunt for the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. (AP Photo/Australian Defence Force, Cpl. Colin Dadd)

The countries searching for the missing Malaysian jet are assessing a claim by a resource survey company that it found possible plane wreckage in the northern Bay of Bengal, Malaysia's defense minister said.

The location is far from where the underwater and surface search has been concentrated for weeks. Australia-based GeoResonance Pty Ltd. stressed that it is not certain it found the Malaysia Airlines plane missing since March 8, but it called for its findings to be investigated.

The company uses imaging, radiation chemistry and other technologies to search for oil, gas or mineral deposits. In hunting for Flight 370, it used the same technology to look on the ocean floor for chemical elements that would be present in a Boeing 777: aluminum, titanium, jet fuel residue and others.

GeoResonance compared multispectral images taken March 5 and 10—before and after the plane's disappearance—and found a specific area where the data varied between those dates, it said in a statement. The location is about 190 kilometers (118 miles) south of Bangladesh.

Malaysian Defense Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said Tuesday that China and Australia were aware of the announcement. "Malaysia is working with its international partners to assess the credibility of this information," a statement from his office said.



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The Joint Agency Coordination Center, which is heading up the search off Australia's west coast, dismissed the GeoResonance report, given that the arc of ocean search crews have been scouring for weeks is well south of the Bay of Bengal.

"The joint international team is satisfied that the final resting place of the missing aircraft is in the southerly portion of the search arc," the center said in a statement.

GeoResonance said it began trying to find the plane before the official

search area moved to the southern Indian Ocean. "The only motivation is to help the families of the missing passengers and crew, knowing the company has the technology capable of the task," it said.

Flight 370 was carrying 239 passengers and crew from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing when it disappeared the morning of March 8. Radar tracking and communications from the cockpit showed the plane reached cruising altitude without incident, but it veered off course for unknown reasons and flew west across the Malay Peninsula.

India, Bangladesh and other countries to the north have said they never detected the plane in their airspace. The jet had contact with a satellite from British company Inmarsat for a few more hours, and investigators have concluded from that data that the flight ended in the southern Indian Ocean.

An underwater signal consistent with an aircraft's black boxes was detected in that search area off western Australia on April 8, but no conclusive evidence has been found.

GeoResonance said it gave its preliminary findings to investigators on March 31 and was surprised by a lack of response. That claim could not be confirmed.

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