

## Oceanographer says Flight 370 could be north of search area (Update)

July 21 2016, by Rod Mcguirk

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A family member of a passenger on board the Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 that went missing March 8, 2014 holds up a placard during a special press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday that the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer

find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area.

Adventurer Blaine Gibson has handed Malaysian authorities three pieces of debris and personal belongings he found on Madagascar beaches and which he suspects came from the Boeing 777 that vanished March 8, 2014.

Western Australia University oceanographer Charitha Pattiaratchi said the same drift modeling that Gibson relied on while looking for Flight 370 debris led his team of oceanographers to suspect the plane could have gone down just north of the search area in the southern Indian Ocean.

"The best guess that we think is that it's probably around the Broken Ridge region, which is slightly to the north of the area that they're looking at," Pattiaratchi said.

But he could not rule out the aircraft being within the 120,000 square kilometers (46,000 square miles) of seabed being searched southwest of Australia. Despite the drift modeling and other predictions officials have made about the plane's possible flight path, no one has been able to explain what has become one of aviation's biggest mysteries.

Officials from Malaysia, China and Australia will meet in Kuala Lumpur on Friday to discuss the future of the underwater search, with fewer than 10,000 square kilometers (3,900 square miles) still to be scanned by ships towing sonar equipment. The search of the seabed has not yielded a single clue.



In this March 22, 2014 file photo, flight officer Rayan Gharazeddine on board a Royal Australian Air Force AP-3C Orion, searches for the missing Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 in southern Indian Ocean, Australia. The oceanographer who led American adventurer Blaine Gibson to Madagascar where he found a potential debris field from the missing Malaysia Airlines jet says drift modeling suggests that Flight 370 could have crashed north of the current search area. The comments comes after Gibson on Tuesday, July 19, 2016, handed Malaysian authorities in Kuala Lumpur pieces of debris and personal belongings found on Madagascar beaches in June, which he suspects came from the jet that vanished with 239 people on board in 2014. (AP Photo/Rob Griffith, File)

Representatives from Voice 370, a group representing family members of the plane's 239 passengers and crew the group met with Australian officials in Kuala Lumpur on Thursday. They urged the governments to suspend, rather than end the search, until new funds can be raised. They also called for a wider base of funding including from Boeing and other plane and component manufacturers.

"We are counting on world governments not to give up on us, not to give up on MH370," said Jacquita Gonzales, whose husband Patrick Gomes was a crew member on the plane.

Australian officials still hope the plane will be found within the current search area, but they agreed the search should continue if new funding is provided, although this is up to the governments, said Grace Subathirai Nathan, who lost her mother, Anne Daisy.

"This has been described as the most bizarre and an unprecedented air incident, and it requires unprecedented measures. They should go beyond what has been done," she said.



In this March 5, 2016 file photo, American adventurer Blaine Gibson speaks to The Associated Press during an interview at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport in Sepang, Malaysia. Adventurer Gibson handed Malaysian authorities in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday, July 19 2016, three pieces of debris and personal belongings that he found on Madagascar beaches in June, which he suspects

came from the Boeing 777 that vanished with 239 people on board during a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014. (AP Photo/Joshua Paul, File)

The Australian Transport Safety Bureau, which has conducted the seabed search on Malaysia's behalf for almost two years, did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Pattiaratchi's views.

Drift modeling was not used to define the search area because no parts of Flight 370 had been found before a wing flap washed up on La Reunion island off the African coast a year ago. The search area was determined by analysis of satellite signals that the plane emitted in its final hours.

But the ATSB has previously said wreckage found on the southwestern shores of the Indian Ocean was consistent with the plane crashing in the expansive search area.

Pattiaratchi's modeling was based on how long the first piece of confirmed Flight 370 wreckage took to reach La Reunion, and his team's calculations of the effects of currents, wind and waves on drifting debris put the crash site just north of the current search area.



Family members of passengers on board the Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 that went missing on March 8, 2014 hold up a placards during a special press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday that the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

Pattiaratchi said the results were not definitive. But families of victims are calling for the search to be shifted based on clues from confirmed debris if the seabed search turns up nothing.

The ATSB, like Pattiaratchi, had identified Madagascar as a potential place for debris to wash up.

In addition to the items Gibson handed over in Kuala Lumpur on Tuesday, another six pieces of potential debris found by Gibson are waiting with Madagascar authorities for Malaysia to collect.

Pattiaratchi said he had told Gibson that Flight 370 debris was likely to concentrate on Madagascar. Pattiaratchi's earlier advice had led Gibson to Mozambique where he found debris in February that experts later determined came from Flight 370.



Jacquita Gomes, right, wife of Patrick Gomes, the in-flight supervisor on the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 speaks during a special press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday that the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)

"He rang me from the Maldives and said: 'Where should I go? Should I go to Rodrigues, Mauritius, Reunion, Madagascar, Mozambique, South Africa?'" Pattiaratchi said Thursday. "I said: 'Your best bet is the northeast part of Madagascar,' which is where he went."

Five pieces of debris found in the southwestern Indian Ocean have been determined as almost certainly from Flight 370.

Gibson gives credit to Pattiaratchi and Australian government oceanographer David Griffin for his finds, although only one has been confirmed as part of Flight 370. Griffin's advice led Gibson to a second Madagascar island where he found the potential debris that he brought to Malaysia.

Gibson said he had been told by Malaysian officials that costs were the reason that a Malaysian investigator had twice canceled plans to fly to Madagascar to retrieve debris he had found.

"They tell me it's a budgetary situation," he said. "If you're spending hundreds of millions of dollars to search under water and finding nothing, and it's only a plane ticket to pick up six pieces and some personal effects, you ought to just do it."





Raphael Ariano, grandson of Patrick Gomes, the in-flight supervisor on the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, embraces his mother, Nicolette Gomes, during a special press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday that the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)



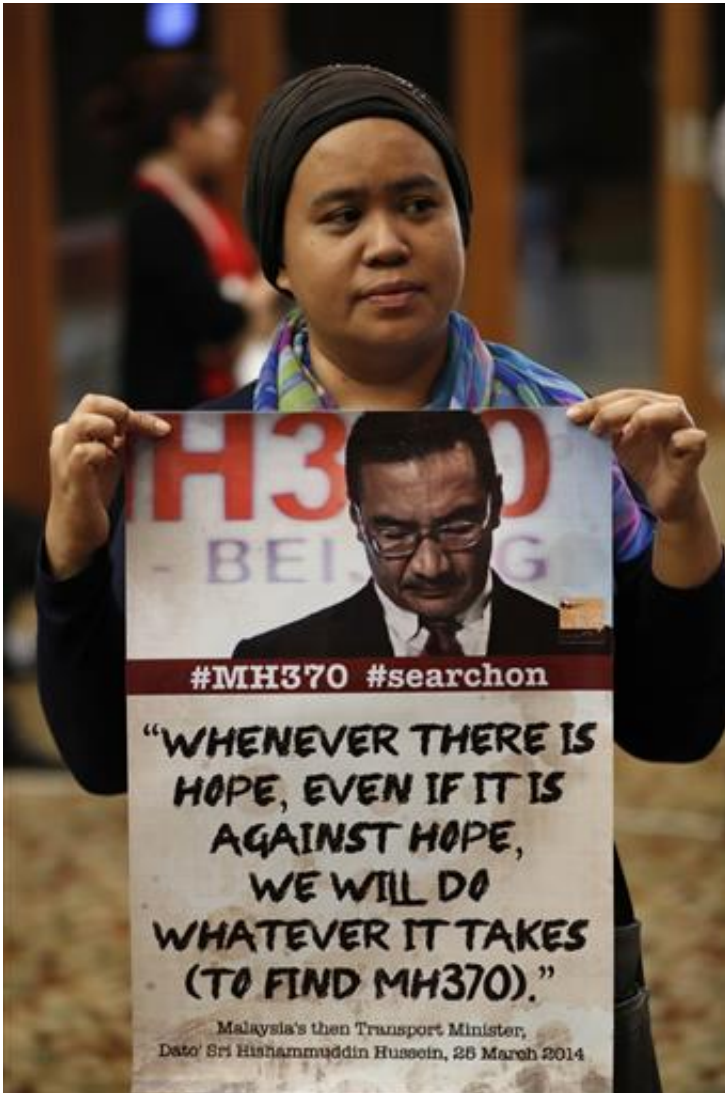
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Nicolette Gomes, daughter of Patrick Gomes, the in-flight supervisor on the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 embraces her son, Raphael Ariano, during a special press conference in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, Thursday, July 21, 2016. The oceanographer whose calculations helped an American adventurer find potential debris from Flight 370 said Thursday that the Malaysia Airlines jetliner could have crashed slightly north of the current search area. (AP Photo/Vincent Thian)



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