



Australian Government

Joint Agency Coordination Centre

MH370 Operational Search Update

4 February 2015

This operational report has been developed to provide regular updates on the progress of the search effort for MH370. Our work will continue to be thorough and methodical, so sometimes weekly progress may seem slow. Please be assured that work is continuing and is aimed at finding MH370 as quickly as possible.

Key developments this week

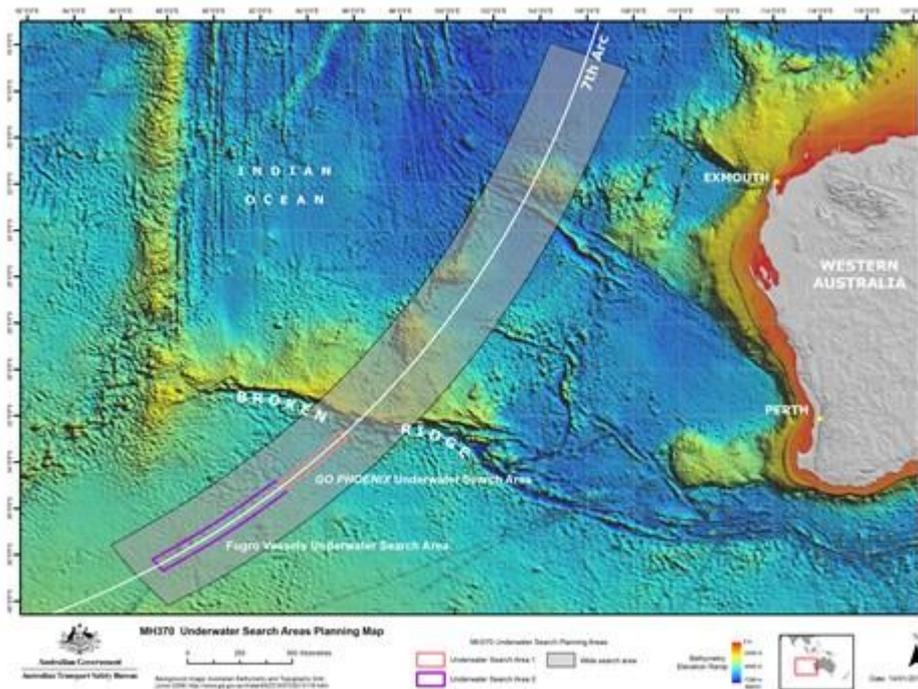
- On 29 January 2015, the Malaysian Government formally declared flight MH370 an accident. The declaration can be found at www.mh370.gov.my.
- The Australian Government acknowledged the declaration and issued a statement which can be viewed at http://www.jacc.gov.au/media/releases/2015/january/mr001_2015.aspx.
- The Chinese Government acknowledged the declaration and also issued a statement.
- On 3 February, *GO Phoenix* arrived at the port of Fremantle to conduct resupply operations.
- *Fugro Equator*, *Fugro Discovery* and *Fugro Supporter* have suspended search operations owing to the effects of two tropical cyclones in the Indian Ocean.
- Over 21,000 square kilometres of the seafloor have now been searched.

Underwater search

In addition to locating the aircraft, the underwater search aims to map the MH370 debris field in order to identify and prioritise the recovery of specific aircraft components, including flight recorders, which will assist with the Malaysian investigation. The ATSB has utilised the data from the bathymetric survey work to prepare the initial plan for the underwater search, to be followed and referred to by all parties involved. The plan includes search timings, methods, procedures, safety precautions and the initial search areas for the various vessels.

Over 21,000 square kilometres of the seafloor have been searched, which is around 35 per cent of the priority search area.

Assuming no other significant delays with vessels, equipment or from the weather, the current underwater search area may be largely completed around May 2015.



Ship movements

GO Phoenix suspended underwater search operations on 28 January in order to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled port visit, arriving on 3 February. Departure is scheduled for around 5 February.

Fugro Equator is scheduled to suspend underwater search operations around 11 February in order to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled port visit.

Fugro Discovery is scheduled to suspend underwater search operations around 12 February in order to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled port visit.

Fugro Supporter arrived in the search area and commenced Autonomous Underwater Vehicle (AUV) operations on 29 January. To date three missions have been conducted in the southernmost portion of the search area.

All three Fugro vessels ceased search operations on 1 February due to severe weather conditions, with wave heights in the search area predicted to reach 12 metres. The vessels are anticipated to recommence search operations around Thursday.

Weather

The effects of tropical cyclone Eunice and ex-tropical cyclone Diamondra resulted in search vessels leaving the search area on 1 February.

Under these conditions the vessels are unable to deploy or retrieve the towfish or AUV equipment due to the safety risks to the crew as well as the risk of damage to the equipment in the rough weather.

The vessels retrieved their equipment on 1 February in time to avoid these risks and have either left the area or have battened down to see out the storm.

Forecast calmer weather should see the vessels return to the priority area and resume search efforts around Thursday.

To give an idea of the sorts of weather conditions experienced in the search area, the following photograph was taken on a day where the sea state was 1-4, characterised as being calm to moderate, with wave heights up to 2.5 metres. Recent sea states have been significantly worse, in the order of up to 8, with wave heights of 9-14 metres.



Caption: An aft view of sea conditions from *Fugro Discovery* in the southern Indian Ocean.
Source: ATSB, photo by ABIS Chris Beerens, RAN.

A video showing calm to moderate sea conditions can be viewed at:
<http://www.jacc.gov.au/media/video/fugro-discovery.aspx>.

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www.jacc.gov.au