



Australian Government

## Joint Agency Coordination Centre

### MH370 Operational Search Update

5 March 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

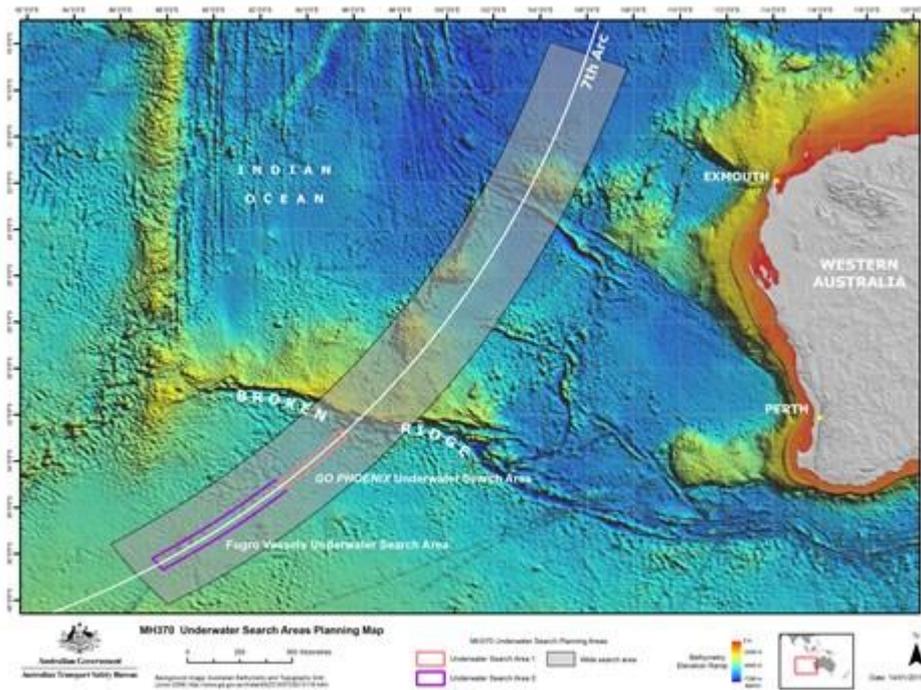
- *GO Phoenix* is currently in the search area conducting underwater search operations.
- *Fugro Discovery* recommenced search operations on 25 February.
- *Fugro Equator* recommenced search operations on 27 February.
- *Fugro Supporter* departed Fremantle on 21 February and after calibrating her AUV sensors on the test range departed for the search area on 23 February. The vessel arrived in the search area on 28 February.
- More than 26,000 square kilometres (over 40 percent) of the priority zone 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.

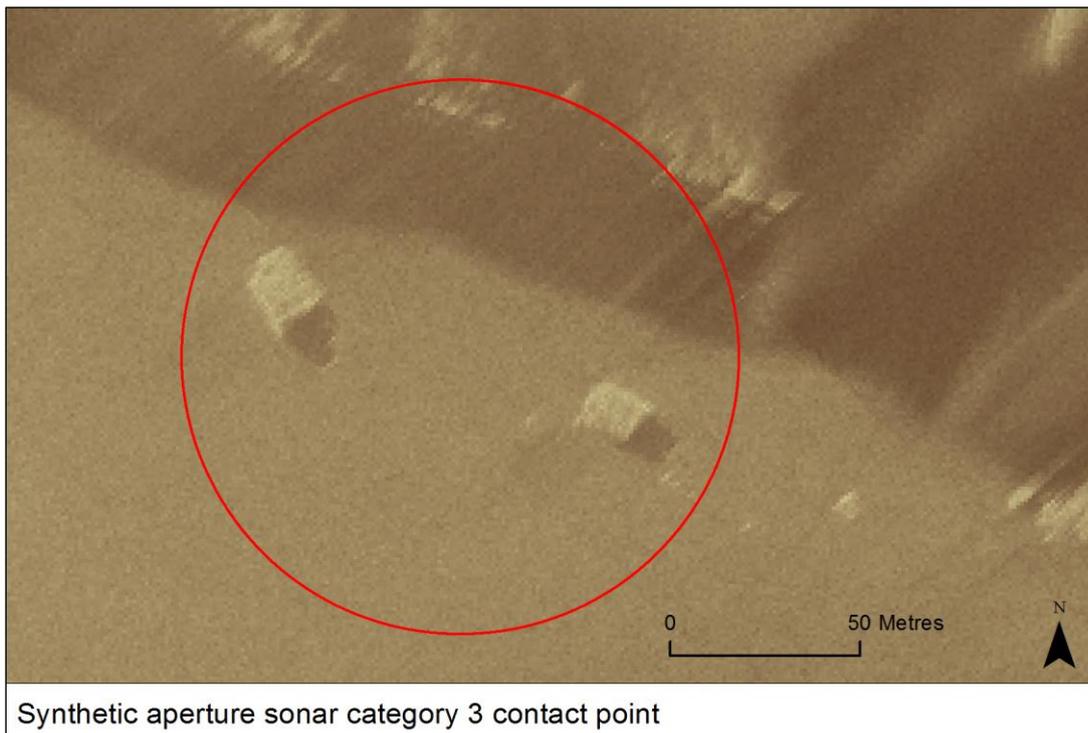
More than 26,000 square kilometres of the seafloor have been searched, which is over 40 percent of the priority search area.

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

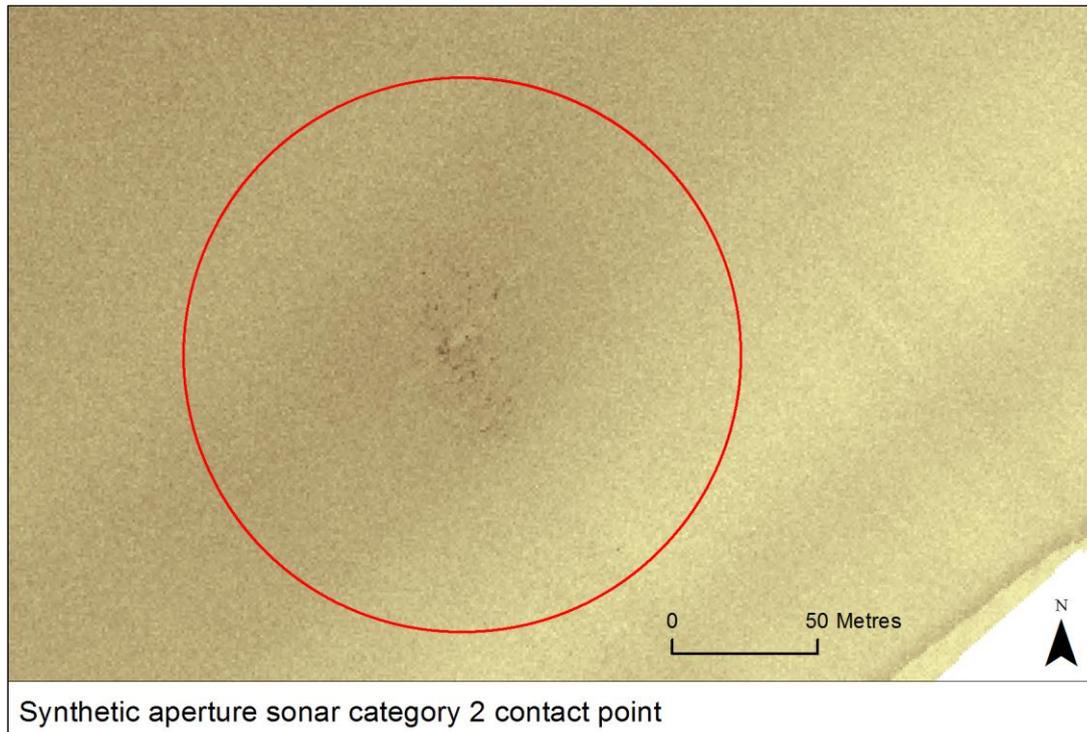


There are three classifications for sonar contacts which are identified during the course of the underwater search. Classification 3 is assigned to sonar contacts that are of some interest as they stand out from their surroundings but have low probability of being significant to the search. Classification 2 sonar contacts are of comparatively more interest but are still unlikely to be significant to the search. Classification 1 sonar contacts are of high interest and warrant immediate further investigation.

The underwater search so far has identified over a hundred seabed features that have been classified as category 3. There have been more than 10 features that have been classified as category 2. These objects *may* be manmade, but expert analysis of the imagery advises that none of them resemble an aircraft debris field. Rather, they have been isolated objects, some of which have the dimensions of shipping containers. To date, no seabed features have been classified as category 1.



Synthetic aperture sonar category 3 contact point



Source: ATSB & Phoenix International

## Ship movements

*GO Phoenix* will depart the search area around 6 March to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled resupply visit. The vessel is expected to arrive in port around 11 March.

*Fugro Equator* will depart the search area around 24 March to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled resupply visit. The vessel is expected to arrive in port around 1 April.

*Fugro Discovery* will depart the search area around 24 March to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled resupply visit. The vessel is expected to arrive in port around 1 April.

*Fugro Supporter* will depart the search area around 2 April to travel to Fremantle for a scheduled resupply visit. The vessel is expected to arrive in port around 8 April.

## Weather

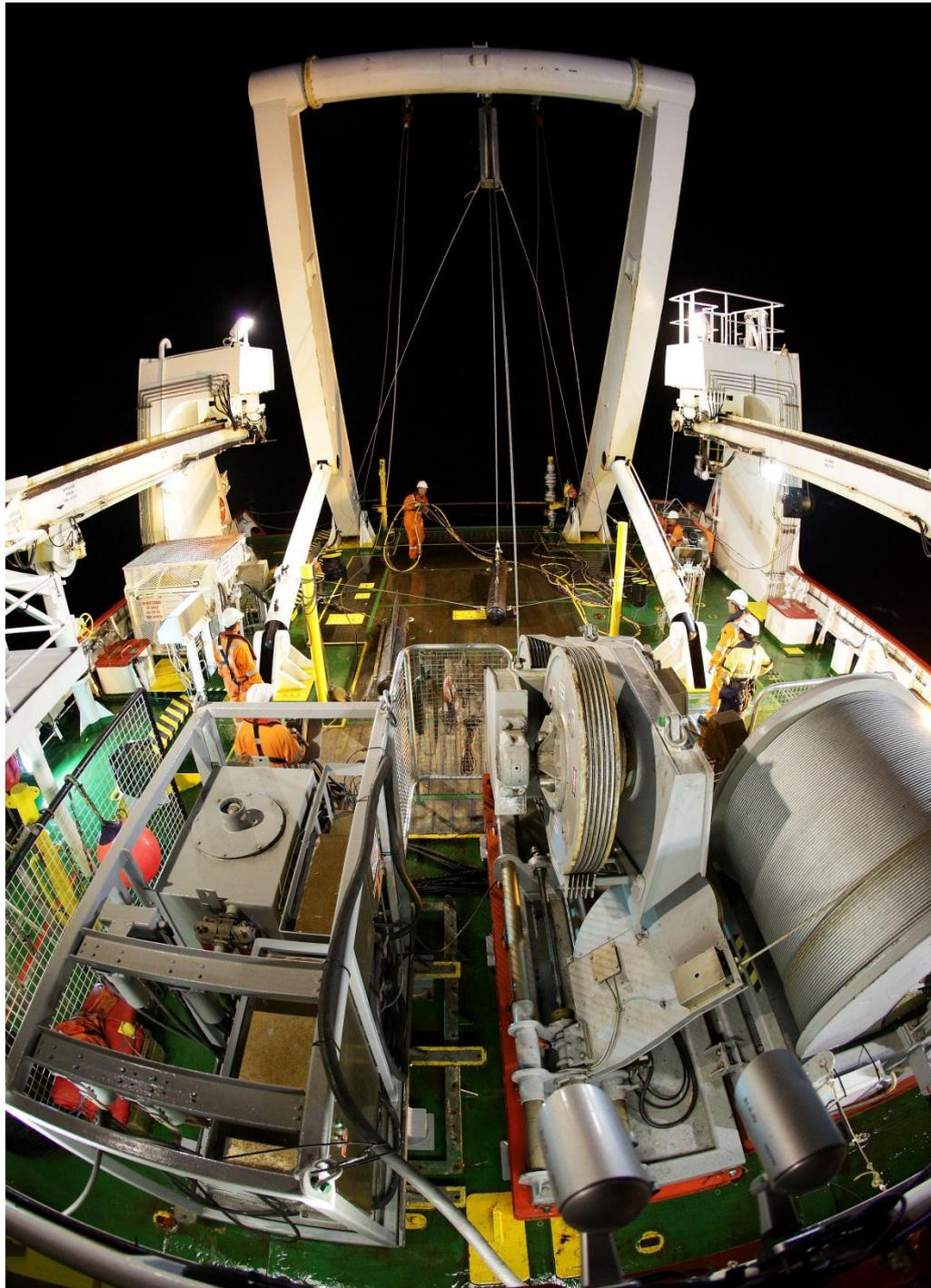
The presence of ex-Tropical Cyclone Glenda in the southern Indian Ocean is unlikely to affect the progress of the search, with the storm passing to the south of the area where the ships are operating.

Overall conditions are expected to continue to be generally favourable during the warmer months.

## Crew life on board search vessels

The crew of the vessels engaged in the search for MH370 are deeply committed to their task. Crew work night and day, for weeks at a time and often in difficult conditions, to launch the search equipment and to monitor and analyse the data collected. In the following interview, Mr Paul Kennedy of Fugro talks about the challenges that the ship and its crew face.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=p8fJqG0mEIQ>



Night-time view from the stern of *Fugro Discovery* as she sails across the southern Indian Ocean. Source: ATSB, photo by ABIS Chris Beerens, RAN.

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