Australian Government

Joint Agency Coordination Centre

MH370 Operational Search Update

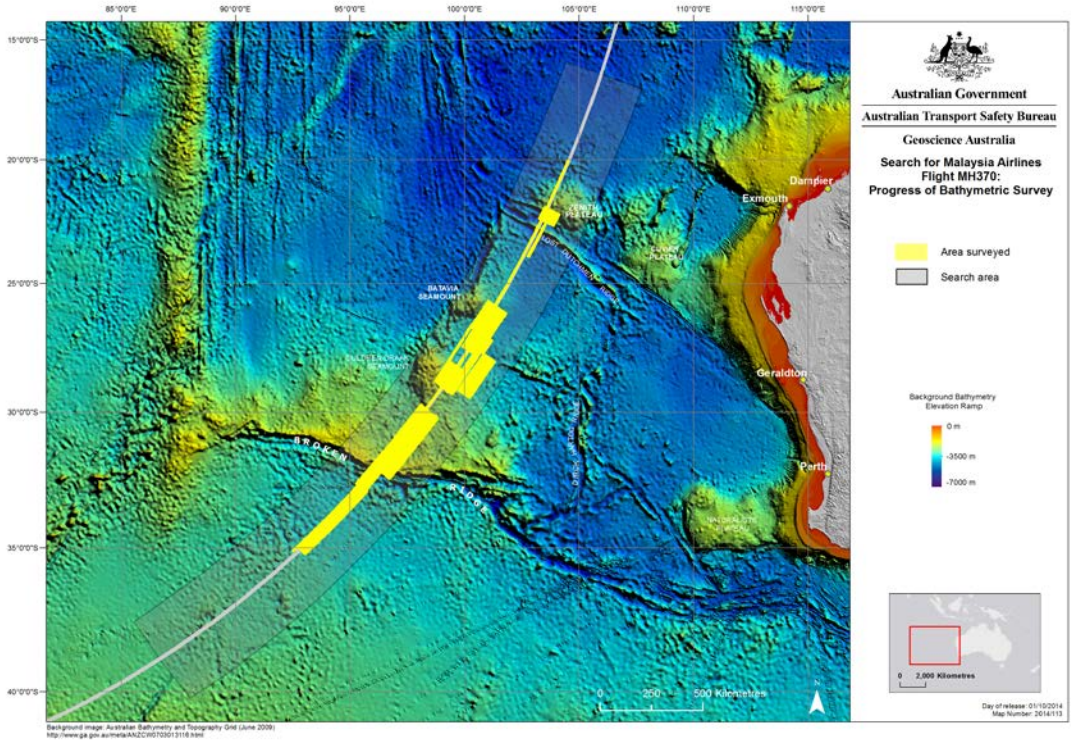
1 October 2014

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.

Bathymetric survey

The bathymetric survey provides a map of the ocean floor to ensure the safe and effective operation of equipment during the underwater search.

Over 111,000 square kilometres of the wide search area have been analysed and mapped (see map below).



The priorities for the search will continue to be reviewed and will change over time.

Ship movements

Having returned to the search area on 24 September after a resupply visit to Fremantle, *Fugro Equator* continues bathymetric survey operations. Conditions in the area have ranged significantly, with high winds and poor sea conditions slowing progress at times. Some data gaps will require resurvey. On Sunday 28 September, however, conditions improved, enabling the survey speed to be gradually increased.

The Chinese support vessel *Haixun 01* finished repairs at the Port of Fremantle. Having completed her MH370 search mission, the vessel commenced return passage to China on 30 September.

Weather

A series of fronts will cross the area over the next four days, with isolated showers anticipated on Wednesday and Saturday. Sea states between 2 and 6 are expected over the next three to four days.

Underwater search

Vessels involved in the search are being jointly funded by Malaysia and Australia. *Fugro Discovery* and *Fugro Equator* (which is currently being used to survey the search area) are Fugro Survey Pty Ltd vessels, and *GO Phoenix* has equipment and experts provided by Phoenix International (Phoenix).

Ship movements

Mobilisation of search assets is already under way. On 24 September, *GO Phoenix* departed Jakarta, Indonesia after work to prepare the vessel for the sea and weather conditions it is likely to encounter in the search area. Calibration of the ultrashort baseline system (the equipment used to position the towfish) was successfully undertaken in the Sunda Strait. The vessel then proceeded to an area close to Christmas Island to calibrate its multibeam echo sounder equipment, which was also successful. *GO Phoenix* is expected to arrive at its allocated underwater search area around 5 October and is expected to conduct operations there for around 12 days before sailing to Fremantle to be resupplied.

Fugro Discovery has completed fit-out work in Durban, South Africa, and is en route to Australia. The vessel's current estimated time of arrival in Fremantle is 5 October, whereupon search equipment and a mission crew will be mobilised.

Fugro Equator, the vessel currently being used to survey the search area, is expected to be mobilised as a search vessel when its bathymetric work is complete around the end of October.

Planning

The ATSB, in consultation with the contracted search experts, is in the process of finalising the initial plan for the underwater search, to be followed and referred to by all parties involved in the

underwater search. The plan for the underwater search will include search timings, methods, procedures, safety precautions and search areas. The first area to be searched has already been surveyed to ensure an accurate understanding of the sea floor topography.

Search priorities

From early in the search, analysis has consistently indicated a very high probability of finding the aircraft along a defined arc in the southern Indian Ocean (where the aircraft last communicated with a ground station through a satellite). This is where the aircraft is assessed to have run out of fuel.

Since then, complex, ground-breaking technical analysis of limited communications data and aircraft flight information has been developed and refined. This work has concentrated on determining the point on the seventh arc that the aircraft was most likely to have reached. This will enable a prioritised search effort in areas along the seventh arc.

Recent refinement to the analysis has given greater certainty about when the aircraft turned south into the Indian Ocean and has produced a better understanding of the parameters within which the satellite ground station was operating during the last flight of MH370.

Based on these refinements, the Search Strategy Working Group is finalising its latest assessment of the highest priority areas for the search, which will most likely extend south of the previous ‘orange’ priority area.

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