



Australian Government

Joint Agency Coordination Centre

MH370 Operational Search Update

13 May 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

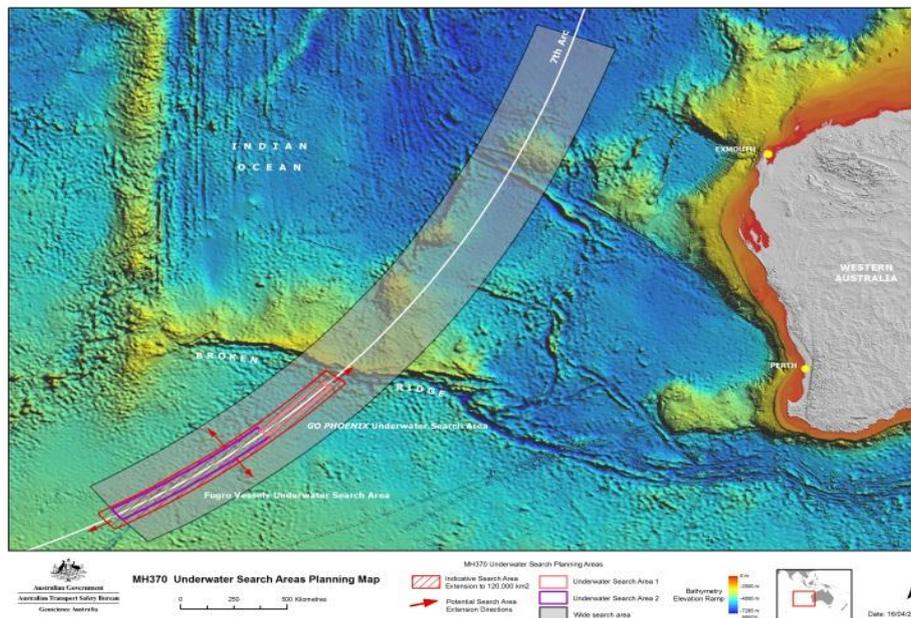
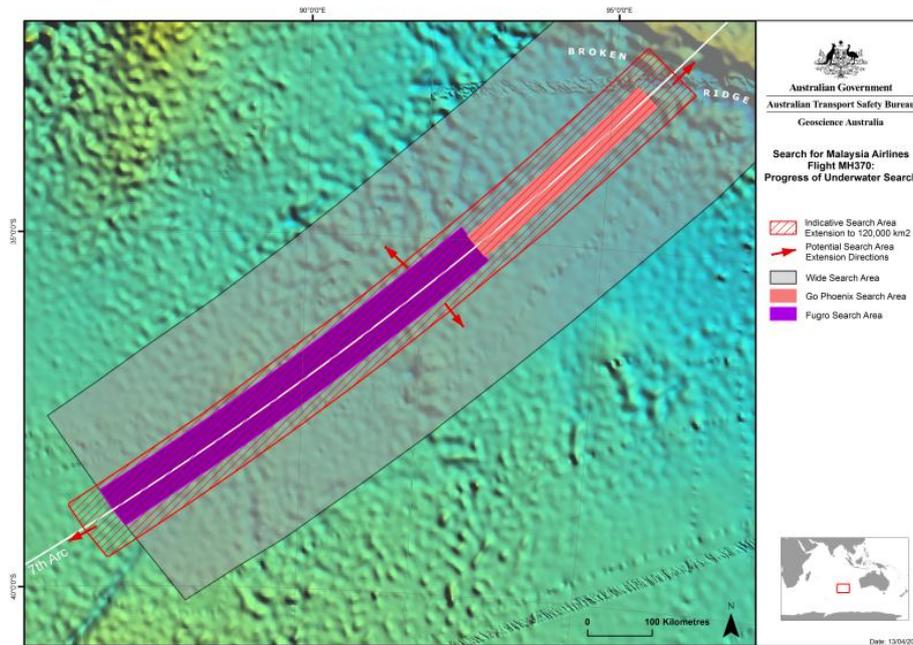
- *GO Phoenix* suspended search operations on 13 May, and commenced passage to Fremantle for routine resupply. She is expected to arrive in port around 18 May.
- *Fugro Discovery* berthed at Fremantle on 12 May to conduct routine resupply. The vessel is expected to depart back to the search area around 14 May.
- *Fugro Equator* continues to conduct search operations to the east of the 7th arc. The vessel is expected to suspend search operations later today in order to travel to Fremantle for routine resupply. It is expected to arrive in port around 20 May.
- *Fugro Supporter* has withdrawn from search operations. The deteriorating weather has brought sea conditions which are beyond the safe launch and recovery limitations of the autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV). *Fugro Supporter* is expected to arrive at the port of Fremantle around 18 May, where the AUV will be offloaded and stored and the survey team will be demobilised.
- While the deep-tow vehicles and the AUV are equipped with the same high frequency sonar and camera systems to investigate potential sonar contacts, the AUV is more agile and better suited to investigating areas of complex seabed. Therefore, AUV operations will not continue in the search area during the winter months, however, the AUV system will remain available to the search at short notice during this time.

Underwater search

The search plan has been modified to enable continuous search operations during winter and to ensure that the entire 120,000 square kilometre area is searched as quickly and effectively as possible. The search into the expanded area has already commenced, with search efforts focused in the south to take advantage of the last of the usable weather in that area. Safety of the search crews also remains a priority.

Expert advice is that the highest probability of locating the aircraft is within the 120,000 square kilometre search area. Beyond that, it is not possible to refine the search area to one of greater likelihood.

Over 75 percent of the seafloor in the initial search area has been searched so far.



The Search Strategy Working Group continues to review evidence associated with MH370 which may result in further refinement of the search area.

In the event the aircraft is found and accessible, Australia, Malaysia and the People's Republic of China have agreed to plans for recovery activities including securing all the evidence necessary for the accident investigation.

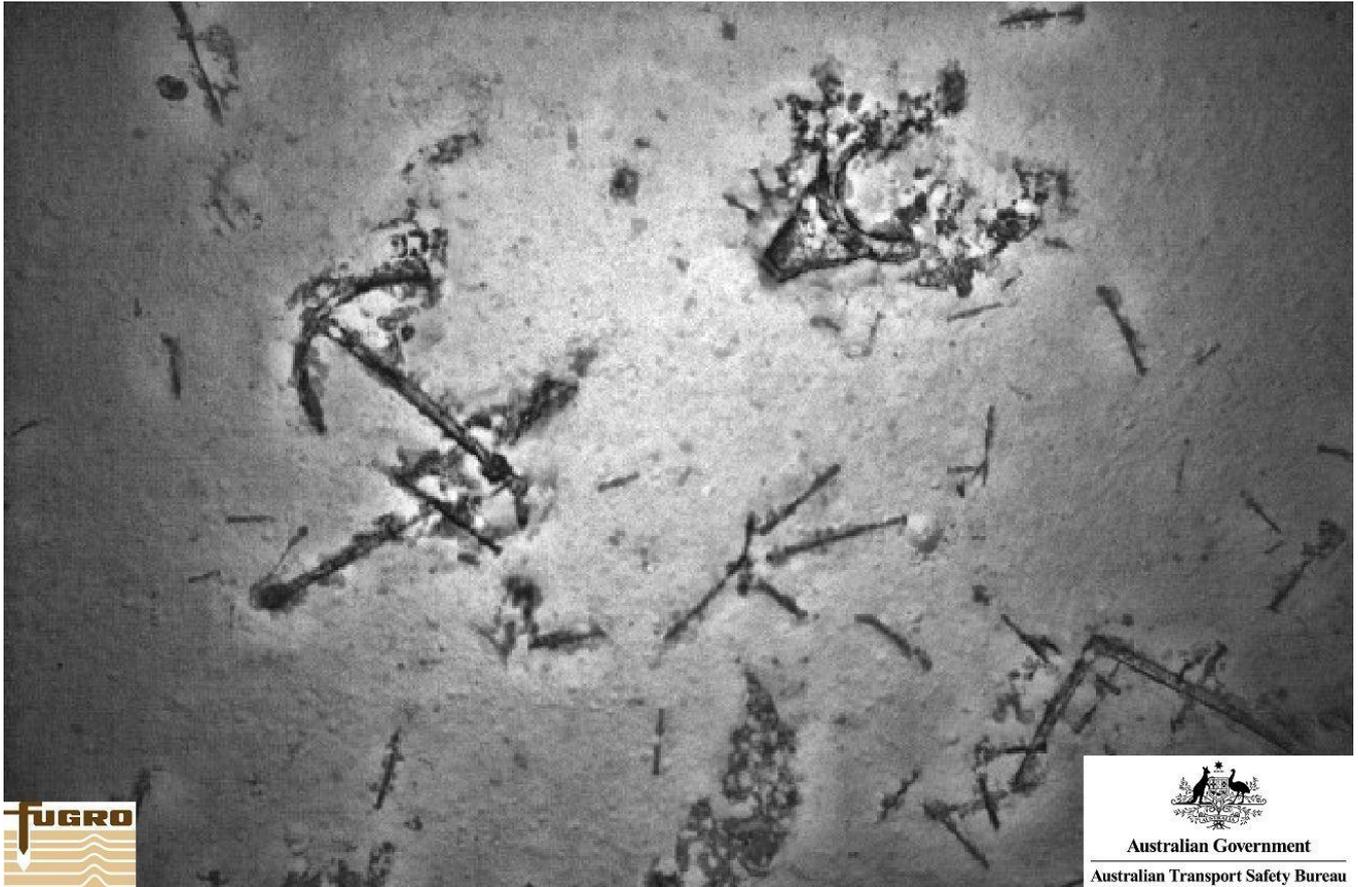
Weather

The weather forecast for the next week is moderate, with sea states between 2 and 8 and sea swells up to 4 metres. However, the adverse weather systems experienced over the last few weeks are indicative of the unfavourable sea conditions that will affect search operations in the colder months.

MH370 search discovers shipwreck

Fugro Equator's deep tow system detected a cluster of small sonar contacts in the southern part of the search area, 12 nautical miles to the east of the 7th arc. The sonar data was carefully analysed and categorised as Class 2 – “of potential interest but unlikely to be related to MH370.” It could not, however, be ruled out.

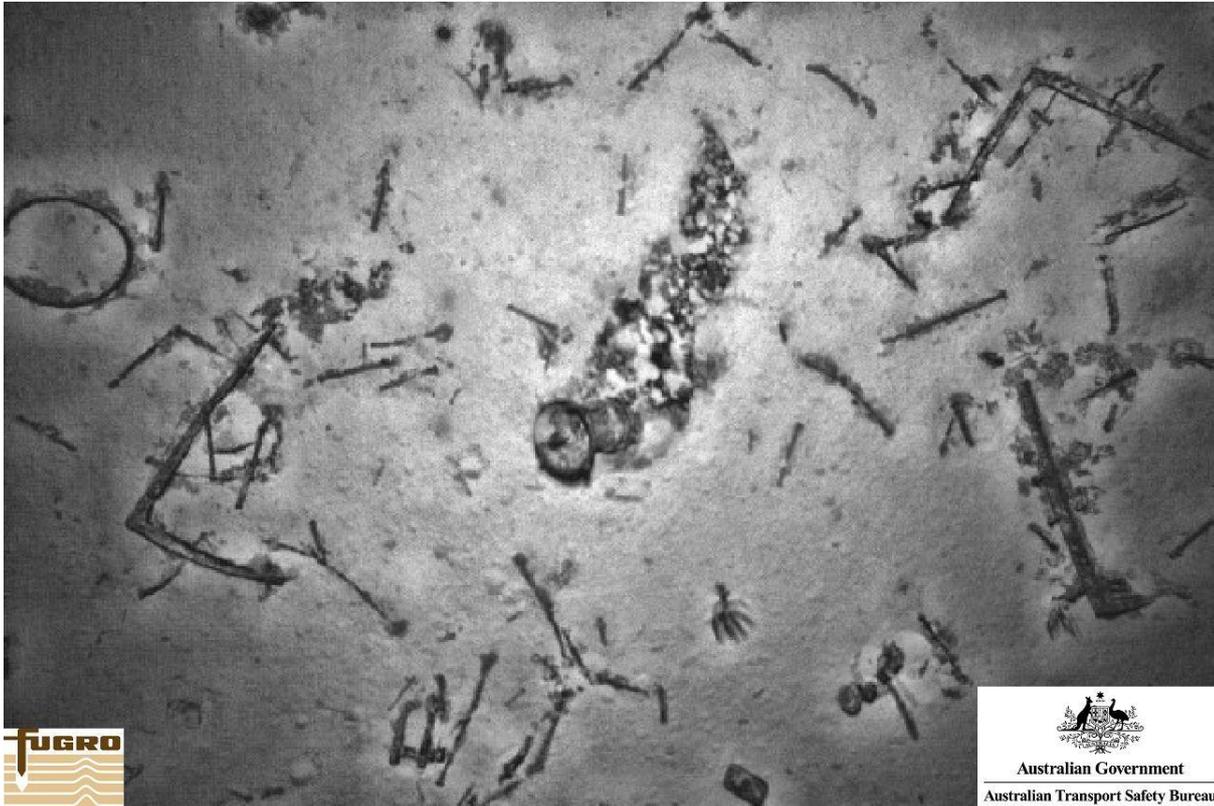
Therefore *Fugro Supporter* was tasked to divert on its passage between two search areas and further investigate the contact. A high-resolution sonar scan was performed using the AUV. The high-resolution data revealed a large number of sonar contacts lying very close to the seafloor, at a depth of around 3900 metres. The majority of the contacts were comparatively small – around the size of a cricket ball – interspersed with a few larger items, the biggest being box shaped and approximately 6 metres in its longest dimension. The debris field appeared to be of man-made origin but once again it did not exhibit all the characteristics of a typical aircraft debris field.



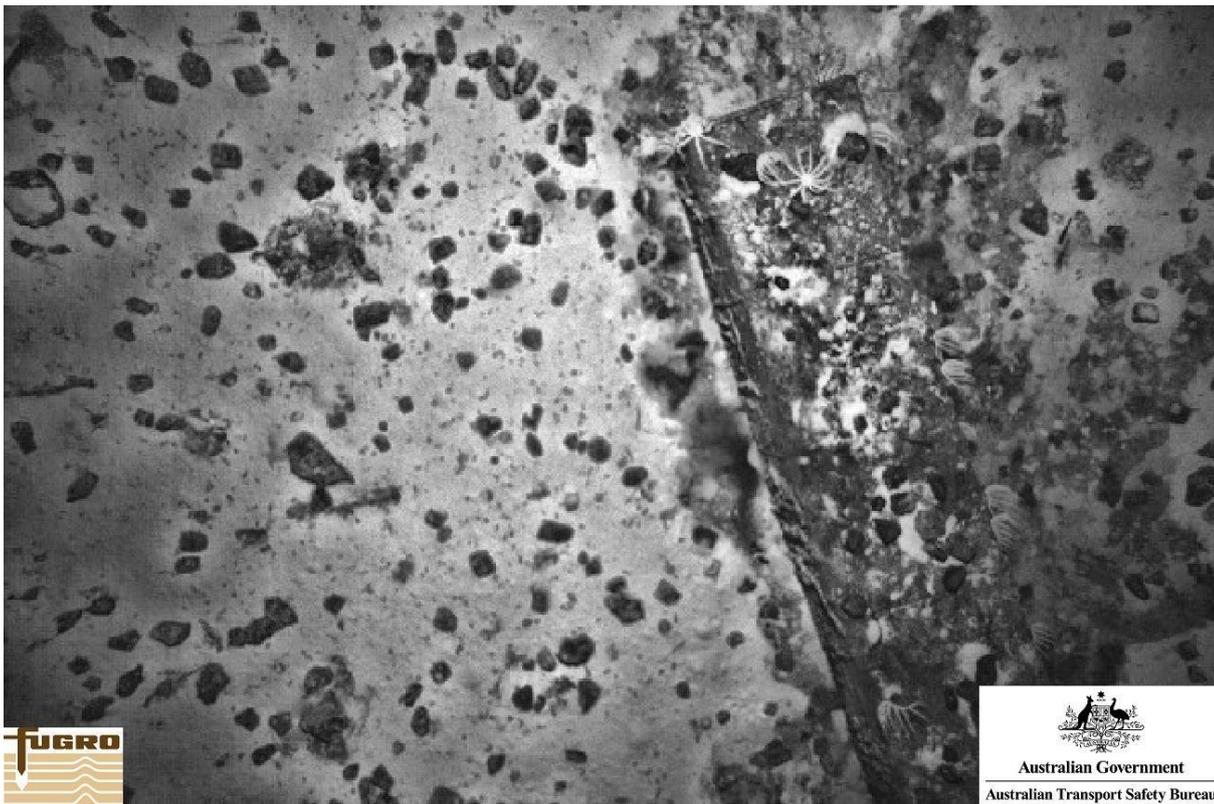
Ship-related debris on the sea floor, including an anchor. Source: ATSB, photo by Fugro.

An additional AUV low-altitude mission was then undertaken using the underwater camera to gather images of the field. Poor weather conditions, however, prevented the safe launching of the AUV for several days.

Analysis of the images this week revealed that the debris was indeed man-made, but indicated that it was actually the wreck of a ship. This wreck is previously uncharted and the imagery will be provided to expert marine archaeologists for possible identification.



Ship-related debris on the sea floor. Source: ATSB, photo by Fugro



Ship-related debris on the sea floor. White sea stars can be seen on some of the debris while the black objects are believed to be lumps of coal. Source: ATSB, photo by Fugro