



Australian Government

Joint Agency Coordination Centre

MH370 Operational Search Update

23 September 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

- *Fugro Discovery* arrived back in the search area on 21 September and recommenced search operations.
- *Fugro Equator* arrived in Henderson this morning for scheduled resupply and maintenance. The vessel is anticipated to depart for the search area on 26 September.

Underwater search

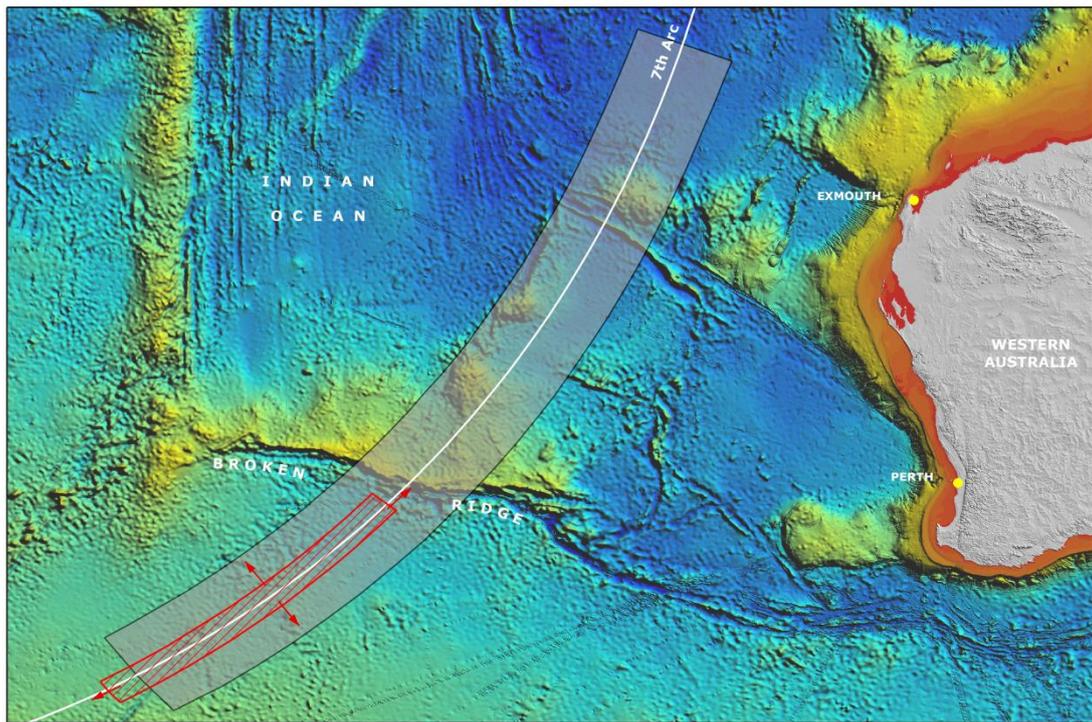
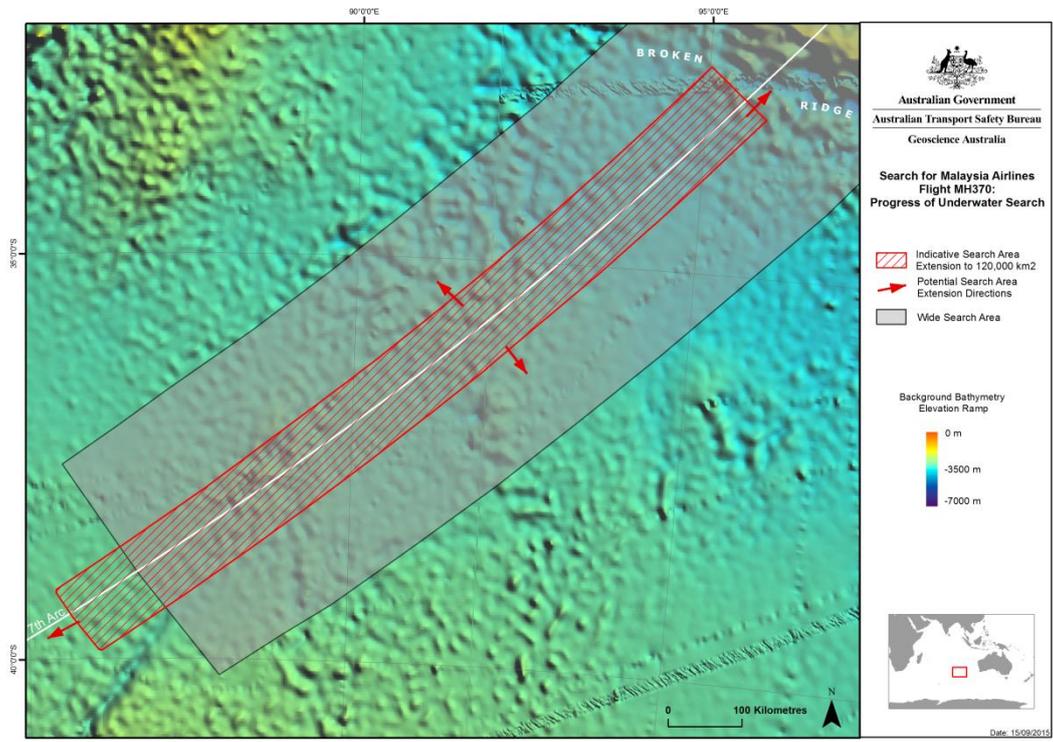
As announced in April, the search area has been expanded beyond an original 60,000 square kilometre search area to enable up to 120,000 square kilometres to be searched if required.

Search plans were revised in April to ensure the area is searched as quickly and effectively as possible despite unfavourable weather conditions. Notwithstanding the onset of spring, weather continues to impact on search operations but conditions are expected to improve in the coming months. The safety of the search crews, as always, remains a priority, and the vessels and equipment utilised will vary to reflect operational needs.

More than 60,000 square kilometres of the seafloor have been searched so far.

The Search Strategy Working Group continues to review evidence associated with MH370 which may result in further refinement of, or prioritisation within, 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.



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MH370 Underwater Search Areas Planning Map

MH370 Underwater Search Planning Areas

- Indicative Search Area
 Extension to 120,000 km²
- Wide search area
- ➔ Potential Search Area
 Extension Directions

Bathymetry
 Elevation Ramp

0 m
█
█
█
 -3500 m
█
 -7000 m
 Approx.

Date: 15/09/2015

Sonar contacts

During this swing *Fugro Discovery* will resurvey several Classification 2 contacts identified previously during the underwater search. More than thirty Classification 2 contacts have been identified to date.

The resurvey of Classification 2 contacts will be conducted using the deep-tow at lower altitude and using higher frequency sonar. The higher resolution data from this method will enable the search team to identify the relevance of such contacts without the need to await the arrival of the autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) which cannot be deployed until the weather improves in the summer months.

The search for MH370 is being conducted thoroughly and to a very high standard and it is important that contacts are comprehensively investigated and considered.

By way of background, there are three classifications for sonar contacts 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; and
- Classification 1 sonar contacts are of high interest and warrant immediate further investigation.

A fact sheet containing further information about sonar contacts as well as image examples of each of the classifications is available on the website of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau via:

<http://www.atsb.gov.au/publications/2015/mh370-sonar-contacts.aspx>.

Weather

The weather is forecast to be marginal over the coming days, but should allow search operations to continue.

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www.jacc.gov.au