

## **Expert recalls missing plane co-pilot's 'textbook-perfect' landing skills**

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**By Looi Sue-Chern**

The two pilots who manned the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 which went missing yesterday, Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah and First Officer Fariq Ab Hamid, have been described as experienced pilots by a CNN aviation expert.

According to Richard Quest, he met the 27-year-old Fariq while filming a CNN Business Traveller programme.

Quest recalled his time in the cockpit with Fariq when the young pilot helped land the plane from Hong Kong to Kuala Lumpur under the supervision of a senior pilot and safety captain.

Quest said the captain had then commented about Fariq's "textbook-perfect" landing during the February 19 trip.

"We were in the cockpit with the first officer and he is an experienced first officer with about two and a half thousand hours of flying.

"He was in the process of transitioning from his previous aircraft to the Boeing 777-200 fleet," he said.

He added Fariq had gone through several months of training with flight simulators and was in training onboard the 777-200 aircraft.

"The captain (Zaharie) onboard this flight with him is an extremely experienced captain," he said.

Zaharie, with 18,365 flying hours under his belt, joined MAS in 1981.

The MAS plane, with 239 people onboard, took off from Kuala Lumpur International Airport for Beijing at 12.40am on Saturday, before it was declared missing.

Interviewed by CNN, Quest said he would be "astonished" if weather had played a role in the disappearance of the plane, adding that weather alone would not affect a flight.

Quest also echoed several other experts in expressing surprise over the absence of distress calls from the plane, adding that MAS perhaps may not be telling details it knew at this moment.

Meanwhile, English daily The Star reported that former school mates of Zaharie from the Penang Free School have poured out their concern and prayers for the missing pilot.

Former MAS staff Ritzeraynn Rashid described him a very experienced pilot while fellow pilot Captain Abdul Manaf Hasan called him a "superb pilot".

Abdul Manaf said Zaharie was an examiner authorised by the Civil Aviation Department (DCA) to conduct simulator tests for pilots. – March 9, 2014.

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