

MAS plane disappearance bears marks of 'catastrophic failure', says aviation lawyer
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An aviation lawyer who has worked on cases with problems similar to the Malaysia Airlines (MAS) plane which went missing yesterday said the lack of warnings about a problem aboard the flight suggests a catastrophic failure during flight.

"The complete absence of any information suggests a catastrophic failure," said Steve Marks, who represented relatives of victims in the Air France crash of 2009, speaking to the US daily, USA Today.

He added that the plane could have broken up due to lack of pressurisation or electrical failure.

Flight MH370 was carrying 239 people, including 12 crew members, when it lost contact with air traffic controllers at 1.30am yesterday, after it took off from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 12.41am for Beijing.

The incident has puzzled authorities and aviation experts as there were no reports of bad weather and no sign of why the Boeing 777-200ER, which has multiple transmitters to indicate its location during a failure, vanished from radar screens.

"There would have been some type of reporting, whether through the radios or the computer system," Marks told the US daily, comparing the absence of any distraught call from the MAS plane to the Air France Airbus A-330, which he said had relayed flight errors to the manufacturer's headquarters in France.

In June 2009, Air France Flight 447 plunged into the Atlantic Ocean, killing all 216 passengers and 12 aircrew in the deadliest plane crash in Air France history.

Rescuers only managed to retrieve bodies and debris from the plane after several days, while investigators took nearly two years to get to the main wreckage including black boxes.

USA Today also quoted an aviation safety consultant who warned of an expensive search and rescue operation that could cost millions and even billions of dollars.

John Cox, a retired airline captain, said based on past incidents, those involved in tracking the MAS plane would focus on the surface of the ocean.

Another aviation expert predicted a difficult search ahead for the MAS aircraft.

"The deeper you get, the harder it is to see," Jim Hall, former chairman of the US's National Transportation Safety Board, told USA Today.

"It's very expensive and very technical work.

"Trying to get the proper people assembled usually takes quite a bit of time," he added. – March 9, 2014.

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