

Singapore search team spots suspicious object 100km from Tho Chu island
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The image from Flightradar24.com which shows the last known position of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370. A Singapore search team has notified spotting a suspicious object floating 100km south-southwest of Vietnam's Tho Chu island, said the country's search and rescue unit coordinating the search for the missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flight MH370.

The Wall Street Journal reported the Hanoi-based coordinators said Vietnamese forces have sent three vessels to the site, the first of which is expected to arrive by 7pm local time (8pm Malaysian time).

The MAS Boeing 777-200 disappeared with 239 people on board, including 12 crew, early Saturday morning while on its way to Beijing.

The Vietnamese navy had earlier reported two oil slicks near the island while the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency (MMEA) has also spotted oil slicks 20 nautical miles (37km) away from the passenger jet's last known position.

A Chinese passenger in a plane flying over the area has also taken pictures of what is possibly debris near where flight MH370 lost contact with air traffic controllers.

The business paper also said a team of American aviation accident investigators, led by National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) experts, is en route to Asia to provide assistance regarding the missing jetliner.

China's navy said today that it had sent two warships to help with the search. Beijing had already sent at least one coast guard vessel and two search and rescue ships toward the area, according to state media.

"Once the aircraft location is identified, international accident rules will determine what country will formally lead the probe," the NTSB said.

The NTSB announcement is the latest sign of the intense international interest in trying to quickly determine what caused the Boeing 777 to disappear from the sky in good weather.

The team, including technical advisers from Boeing and the Federal Aviation Administration, left the US Saturday and would "be positioned to offer US assistance," the NTSB added.

The NTSB is unlikely to lead what is bound to be a complex and extensive probe, but the board's expertise is likely to play a big role in establishing the chain of events. China, Malaysia and Vietnam, which are currently searching for signs of wreckage, could formally request certain types of help from the US.

The NTSB's decision, according to air-safety officials, indicates that at least at this point, US aviation regulators and safety watchdogs are treating the plane's disappearance and presumed crash as an accident rather than an act of terrorism.

The officials stressed that could change as more details surface, the paper said.

For now, though, it is the NTSB investigators, rather than law-enforcement or anti-terrorism officials, who are leading Washington's public response. – March 9, 2014.

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