

US sends Navy ships and planes to assist in search efforts
Malaysian Insider
9 March, 2014

The USNS John Ericsson is one of two United States Navy ships deployed to the South China Sea to assist in search and rescue efforts. The United States has sent two Navy ships and an airplane equipped with long-range radar to help in the search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 which has gone missing in the South China Sea.

According to the US Embassy in Malaysia, teams from the American National Transportation Safety Board and Federal Aviation Administration are also currently en route to the region to offer assistance.

“At the request of the Malaysian government, the United States Navy has dispatched two ships, the USS Pinckney and the USNS John Ericsson, to assist in the search and rescue efforts.

“The ship carries two MH-60R helicopters which can be equipped for search and rescue,” said a statement from the US Embassy.

The USNS John Ericsson, a replenishment oiler operated by the Military Sealift Command, has also sailed from Singapore this morning to support the search and rescue efforts, the statement said.

A Navy P-3C Orion aircraft left Kadena Air Base in Okinawa, Japan, this morning to help in the search. The plane brings long-range search, radar and communications capabilities to the search effort.

Forty ships and 22 planes continue to scour a portion of the South China Sea for any sign of where the flight might have gone down shortly after it took off from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing at 12.41am on Saturday.

The large, multinational team is focusing its effort near the Gulf of Thailand, part of the South China Sea that lies between several Southeast Asian countries.

The area in focus, about 145km south of Vietnam's Tho Chu Island, is the same one as where a Vietnamese search plane reportedly spotted oil slicks that stretched as long as 14.5km.

“In addition, US Embassy-based representatives from US law enforcement agencies are in contact with their Malaysian counterparts.

“The United States government continues to closely follow the developments. We extend our thoughts and prayers to the loved ones of those on board the Malaysia Airlines flight.” – March 9, 2014.

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Source: <http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/us-sends-navy-ships-and-planes-to-assist-in-search-efforts>