

Flight MH370 sent engine data before vanishing, says magazine
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The missing Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777-200ER sent at least two bursts of technical data back to the airline before it disappeared, according to the New Scientist magazine.

The data may help investigators understand what went wrong with the aircraft, no trace of which has yet been found since it disappeared early Saturday morning, the magazine reported yesterday.

"Malaysia Airlines has not revealed if it has learned anything from ACARS data, or if it has any," it said, referring to the Aircraft Communications Addressing and Reporting System (ACARS), which automatically collates and files four technical reports during every flight so that engineers can spot problems.

These reports are sent via VHF radio or satellite at take-off, during the climb, at some point while cruising, and on landing.

The magazine noted that Malaysia Airlines' 11th media statement had said, "All Malaysia Airlines aircraft are equipped with ACARS which transmits data automatically. Nevertheless, there were no distress calls and no information was relayed."

"This would suggest no concrete data is to hand. But New Scientist understands that the maker of the missing Boeing 777's Trent 800 engines, Rolls Royce, received two data reports from flight MH370 at its global engine health monitoring centre in Derby, UK, where it keeps real-time tabs on its engines in use.

"One was broadcast as MH370 took off from Kuala Lumpur International Airport, the other during the 777's climb out towards Beijing," it said.

It noted that as the engine data is filtered from a larger ACARS report covering all the plane's critical flight systems and avionics, "it could mean the airline has some useful clues about the condition of the aircraft prior to its disappearance."

"The plane does not appear to have been cruising long enough to issue any more ACARS reports," the report said, referring to reports that said the plane vanished from radar at 1.30am local time, halfway between Malaysia and Vietnam over the Gulf of Thailand.

Under International Civil Aviation Organisation rules, such reports are normally kept secret until air investigators need them, it said.

The search for the missing aircraft continues for the fifth day today, covering the Andaman Sea, the Strait of Malacca and the South China Sea.

There has been no trace of the plane since it disappeared, leading to it being dubbed as an "unprecedented aviation mystery". – March 12, 2014.

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