

**Malaysian officials are either poor communicators or just incompetent, says expert**  
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**By Lee Shi-Ian**

The credibility of Malaysia's leaders took a further battering today when CNN reported that a top American transport official had described local officials as being either "poor communicators or at worst, plain incompetent."

Former National Transportation Safety Board managing director Peter Goelz said this was the worst he had ever seen in disaster management.

"There has been misinformation and corrections from Malaysian authorities on the whereabouts of MH370," Goelz told CNN.

"Did passengers check in but not board the aircraft? How did the two men use the stolen passports to board the aircraft?"

"Is the wreckage of MH370 near the last location where their radar was detected?" Goelz asked.

"At best, Malaysian officials have thus far been poor communicators; at worst, they are incompetent," he said

Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, carrying 12 crew members and 227 passengers, dropped off the radar at 1.20am on Saturday.

Despite a massive 12-nation search and rescue operation, there have been no clues as to the whereabouts of MH370.

"There is a reason for this. As you know, every time there is an accident, especially an international one like this, there is chaos during the first 24 to 36 hours," Goelz said.

"That is why there is a treaty which everyone has signed, including the Malaysians."

"The treaty explains the necessary steps and measures which are carried out to handle an investigation of this magnitude," Goelz told CNN.

"It also explains how to involve other countries which have a vested interest, how to control rumours and release factual information."

Goelz said to this day, Malaysia has not followed the treaty, hence the contradicting information being released by various quarters.

Goelz is the latest to take Putrajaya to task over the way the crisis is being managed.

Acclaimed American journalist who specialises in South East Asia affairs, Thomas Fuller, writing in The New York Times today, said the lack of coordination between Malaysian agencies and the conflicting updates on the worldwide search for the jet only shows how the country's leaders were just reacting to growing criticism of the way the situation is handled, rather than having a firm grasp of things.

"But worldwide bafflement at the disappearance of Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 has challenged the country's paternalistic political culture and exposed its coddled leaders to the withering judgments of critics from around the world," he said.

That authoritarian trait, according to critics, is now reflected in Malaysia's management of the mysterious disappearance of MH370, which went missing last Saturday shortly after taking off Kuala Lumpur International Airport for Beijing. – March 13, 2014.

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