

**Inside knowledge needed to disable plane system, says Wall Street Journal  
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For the multiple communication systems of MH370 to be manually disabled, if that were the case, it would have required detailed knowledge of the long range Boeing 777's inner workings, the Wall Street Journal reported today.

The first loss of the jet's transponder, which communicates the jet's position, speed and call sign to air traffic control radar, would require disabling a circuit breaker above and behind an overhead panel, the paper reported.

Access to the circuit breakers is reserved for maintenance personnel, and rarely done by pilots.

In order to disable both transponders on a 777, pulling one specific circuit breaker would do the job, said WSJ after reviewing documents and speaking to aviation industry officials who have worked with this model.

Experts also said that in order to be familiar with the systems in the 777, extensive training for pilots and mechanics would be needed, although a lot of technical data on the plane type is also accessible online via discussion groups and websites.

The report said that the shutdown of the reporting system on the plane after it was last seen on radar could be done in a series of keystrokes on either of the cockpit's two flight management computers, where the computers are used to set the performance of the engines upon takeoff, to plan the route and other functions to guide the plane.

Investigators are looking into whether or not "something catastrophic happened or someone switched off" the satellite communication system, said WSJ, quoting one of two people familiar with the jetliner's last known position.

An aviation professional said disabling the system would require considerable understanding of the plane's inner workings, adding that some airlines outfit the access hatch to the area below the floor with a special screw to prevent unauthorised intrusion.

It was reported that the flight's automated communication system appeared to be intact for up to five hours, based on "pings" received after the transponder last emitted a signal.

Initially, the origin of the final ping from the missing MH370 seemed like an anomaly to investigators, as it was thought the plane had crashed off the coast of Vietnam, hundreds of miles from the location of the final "ping".

The WSJ report further stated that until a few years ago, satellite communication system used by jetliners didn't include data on an aircraft's location in the pings, the electronic equivalent of handshakes used to establish initial contact.

When Air France flight 447 crashed into the Atlantic Ocean in 2009, it sent some diagnostic data indicating problems with various onboard signals, including the autopilot's deactivation, but the plane's position was not transmitted with the data.

In the case of MH370, although precise locations were provided, it remains unclear why the transmission ceased and where the plane ended up after the final ping, WSJ reported. – March 15, 2014.

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