

Focus now on 'those in the cockpit' of MH370
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American intelligence officials are leaning towards the theory that "those in the cockpit" – the pilots of Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 – were responsible for the disappearance of the commercial jetliner, an American official with direct knowledge of the latest developments told CNN yesterday.

The revelation comes in the heels that Malaysian authorities searched the home of the lead pilot – Captain Zaharie Ahmad Shah – on the same day that Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak said at a briefing yesterday the plane veered off course and attributed it to deliberate action taken by someone onboard the Boeing 777-200ER.

The CNN report said the Malaysian government had been looking for a reason to search the home of the pilot and the co-pilot for several days.

However, it said, it was only in the last 24 to 36 hours when radar and satellite data came to light that authorities believed they had sufficient reason to search the homes of Zaharie, 53, and co-pilot, Fariq Abdul Hamid, 27.

"The Malaysians don't do this lightly," an American official said on condition of anonymity.

At this stage, it's not clear whether Putrajaya believes one or both men could have been responsible for whatever happened to the plane when the Boeing 777-200 ER (9M-MRO) disappeared on March 8 en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing, the CNN report said.

The official said no final conclusions have been drawn and all the internal intelligence discussions were based on preliminary assessments.

A source close to the investigation told CNN that police had search Zaharie's home in Shah Alam, outside of Kuala Lumpur.

It reported that small bags, similar to shopping bags, were loaded into two vans at Fariq's home.

Police refused to comment about it.

Najib made clear in a press conference yesterday that in light of the latest developments, authorities have refocused their investigation into the crew and passengers on board.

Undoubtedly, they will scour through the flight manifest and look further to see whether anyone on board had flight training or connections with suspect groups.

Search operations by navies and aircraft from more than a dozen nations were immediately called off in the Gulf of Thailand and the South China Sea to the east of **Malaysia**, where the plane dropped off civilian air traffic control screens at 1.22am last Saturday.

Najib added that the plane's final communication with satellites at 8.11am placed it somewhere in one of two corridors: a northern arc stretching from northern Thailand to the border of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan, or a southern one stretching from Indonesia to the vast southern Indian Ocean. – March 16, 2014.

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