

MH370 search area is now 2.24 million square nautical miles, says Hishammuddin
Malaysian Insider
18 March, 2014
By Lee Shi-Ian

The search area for the missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has now been expanded to a massive 2.24 million square nautical miles, said Datuk Seri Hishammuddin Hussein. The Acting Transport Minister said both the northern and southern corridors have been divided into seven quadrants each.

"In the northern and southern corridors, each quadrant is 160,000 square nautical miles in total," he told a packed auditorium at the Kuala Lumpur International Airport.

Hishammuddin said in the southern corridor, Australia and Indonesia have agreed to take the lead of their respective parts of the search corridor.

"In the northern corridor, China and Kazakhstan have agreed to lead in the search areas closest to their countries," he said.

Hishammuddin said Australia has already moved a P-3C Orion aircraft to the region of the Cocos and Christmas Islands.

"Today, the Prime Minister of Australia confirmed that Australia will send an additional two P-3C Orions and a C-130 Hercules. A US P-8A Poseidon aircraft will also be travelling to Perth today to help with the search," he said.

"This is an enormous search area and it is something which Malaysia cannot possible search on its own," Hishammuddin said,

He said many countries had come forward to offer assistance and support to the ongoing search and rescue operation.

Hishammuddin, who is also the Defence Minister, revealed that the Royal Malaysian Navy had deployed additional resources to the SAR operations.

"Two more ships and a Super Lynx helicopter was deployed today to the southern corridor," he said.

This brings to four the total number of RMN vessels and two Super Lynx helicopters currently deployed in the southern corridor.

Hishammuddin said Malaysia had also deployed two C-130 aircraft to the Indonesian sector of the southern corridor.

When MH370 first disappeared on March 8, the search began 50 nautical miles (93 kilometres) from Igari, off Kota Baru.

It was later expanded to 100 nautical miles (186km) when initial SAR operations failed to reveal any clues.

Hishammuddin said other countries had also contributed assets to assist in the SAR operation.

The United States, Australia, New Zealand, South Korea, Japan and the United Arab Emirates have all deployed aircraft.

On the logistical front, over the past 24 hours we have been working hard with other countries to narrow the search corridors.

"Our focus is on four tasks: gathering information from satellite surveillance, analysis of surveillance radar data, increasing air and surface assets, and increasing the number of technical and subject matter experts," he said .

He said the search for MH370 remains the government's top priority.

"In the last few days we have been intensively contacting our friends across the search regions. The co-operation we saw in the first phase continues in this new phase.

"In fact, there is even more commitment to assist us in this much larger and more complex multinational operation," he said. – March 18, 2014.

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