

Australia, Malaysia, Indonesia to trial new jet tracking system
The Malaysian Insider
March 1, 2015

Australia Sunday said it was trialling a "world first" system with Malaysia and Indonesia that increases the tracking of aircraft over remote oceans, allowing authorities to quickly react to abnormal situations such as the disappearance of MH370.

It raises the minimum tracking rate for planes flying over remote oceans to 15 minutes from current intervals of 30-40 minutes.

The technology "can increase realtime monitoring should an abnormal situation arise," Australian Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss said.

"In a world first, all three countries will trial a new method of tracking aircraft through the skies over remote oceanic areas," Truss told reporters.

"This initiative adapts existing technology used by more than 90% of long-haul passenger aircraft and would see air traffic control able to respond more rapidly should an aircraft experience difficulty or deviation from its flight plan."

The announcement came almost a year after Malaysian Airlines MH370 went missing en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board last March.

A massive air and underwater search has failed, so far, to find any evidence of the plane.

While the system was "not a silver bullet", it would help to improve current methods of tracking ahead of other solutions being developed, Airservices Australia chairman Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston said.

If an aircraft deviates more than 200 feet from its assigned level or two nautical miles from its expected track, the system would automatically monitor the jet more closely, such as every five minutes or almost continuously, he added.

"This is a big step forward. It's not just changing things. It's going to make the monitoring of aircraft over these oceanic areas more effective," the head of the air traffic control body said.

"We will have a datum close to where the aircraft ran into trouble, which is in marked contrast to MH370 where the last known position was in the Malacca Straits."

The trial, using automatic dependent surveillance contract (ADSC) technology, will commence at the air traffic services centre in the eastern city of Brisbane before being extended to Melbourne in the country's south and to Indonesia and Malaysia.

Long-haul jets that use the existing technology include wide-bodied planes such as Boeing's 380, 777, 330, 340 and 350 models, Truss said. – AFP, March 1, 2015.

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