MH370: The Flight Data Recorder ULB Battery Expired In Dec 2012
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KUALA LUMPUR, March 8 (Bernama) -- The Solid State Flight Data Recorder (SSFDR), one of the two black boxes, Underwater Locator Beacons (ULB) battery for missing Malaysia Airlines (MAS) MH370 aircraft had expired in December 2012, about 14 months before the incident.

According to the factual information which was prepared by the Malaysian International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) Annex 13 Safety Investigation Team for MH370 and made public Sunday, there was no evidence to suggest that the battery had been replaced before the expiry date.

However, the Solid State Cockpit Voice Recorder (SSCVR), the other black box, ULB battery was replaced as scheduled with the next expiry in June 2014.

"While there is a definite possibility that a ULB, will operate past the expiry date on the device, it is not guaranteed that it will work or that it would meet the 30-day minimum requirement.

"There is also limited assurance that the nature of the signal (characteristics such as frequency and power) will remain within specification when battery voltage drops below the nominal 30-day level," the information said.

Both crash-protected recorders were equipped as provided by the regulations with ULB whose transmission time is at least 30 days, on the 37.5 kHz frequency, operating depth up to 20,000 ft (6096 m) and activated with fresh or salt water immersion.

Technical log records showed that the SSFDR (together with the ULB) was replaced on the aircraft on 29 Feb, 2008 and the component installation records for the ULB showed that at the time the SSFDR was replaced on the aircraft, the expiry date for the battery was December 2012.

Meanwhile, interviews with the MAS Engineering Technical Records staff to determine why the ULB battery was not replaced before the expiry revealed that the Engineering Maintenance System (EMS), a computer system used to track and call out maintenance was not updated correctly when the SSFDR was replaced on Feb 29, 2008.

According to factual information, the update involved removal of the old unit in the system followed by installation of the new unit and, although the old unit was removed , the new unit was inadvertently not installed in the system.

"Since the system was not updated it did not trigger for the removal of the SSFDR for replacement of the ULB battery when it was due. ULB battery replacement is normally done in the workshop by routing the removed SSFDR, together with the ULB, to the

workshop," it added.

This oversight was not noted until after the disappearance of MH370 on March 8 last year when details of the ULBs were requested.

MAS Engineering Technical Records carried out a fleet-wide record inspection for the ULBs to ensure all records for other aircraft were updated accordingly.

The almost 600-page factual information was released today by the investigation team.

On March 8 last year, MAS Flight MH370 which was carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew, vanished from radar screens while flying over the South China Sea less than an hour after departing from the Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 12.41am.

The Boeing 777-200ER jetliner was scheduled to arrive in Beijing at 6.30am on the same day.

To date, the search operation at in the southern Indian Ocean -where the plane was believed to have disappeared - has covered about 40 per cent of the 60,000sq km search area and about 208,000sq km of the ocean has been mapped.

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