

New debris found on island in hunt for MH370 answers
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Investigators probing missing flight MH370 collected more metallic debris on an Indian Ocean island on Sunday as Malaysia urged authorities in the region to be on alert for wreckage washing up on their shores.

Locals on La Reunion island have been combing the shores since a Boeing 777 wing part was found last Wednesday, sparking fevered speculation that it may be the first tangible evidence that the Malaysia Airlines plane crashed into the Indian Ocean.

An AFP photographer early Sunday saw police collect a mangled piece of metal inscribed with two Chinese characters and attached to what appears to be a leather-covered handle.

The debris, measuring about 100 square centimetres, was placed into an iron case.

Also on Sunday morning a man handed police a piece of debris measuring 70 centimetres, guessing it was part of a plane door.

Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said civil aviation authorities were reaching out to their counterparts in other Indian Ocean territories to be on the lookout for further debris.

"This is to allow the experts to conduct more substantive analysis should there be more debris coming onto land, providing us more clues to the missing aircraft."

He also confirmed in a statement that the wing part found Wednesday on the French island had been "officially identified" as from a Boeing 777 – making it virtually certain that it was from missing Malaysia Airlines flight MH370.

Flight MH370 is the only Boeing 777 to ever be lost at sea.

A spokesman for Australia's Transport and Infrastructure Minister Warren Truss said that more "objects are being brought to local stations but nothing 'obvious' so far. And no door."

Wing part analysed in France

While the wing part – known as a flaperon – has been sent to France for further analysis, locals on La Reunion are scouring the beach for more debris in what a French source close to the investigation likened to a "treasure hunt".

The discovery comes after a gruelling 16-month search that has yielded no evidence of what happened to the plane that disappeared on March 8, 2014, en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing with 239 people on board.

The flight's mysterious disappearance, which saw it vanish off radars as a key transponder appeared to have been shut off, has baffled aviation experts and grieving families and given rise to a myriad conspiracy theories.

Speculation on the cause of the plane's disappearance has focused primarily on a possible mechanical or structural failure, a hijacking or terror plot, or rogue pilot action.

Scientists say it is plausible that ocean currents carried a piece of the wreckage as far as La Reunion.

Malaysia's deputy transport minister Abdul Aziz Kaprawi told AFP that the Boeing 777 wing part "could be the convincing evidence that MH370 went down in the Indian Ocean."

"I believe that we are moving closer to solving the mystery of MH370," he said.

The flaperon will be examined in a lab near the French city of Toulouse that specialises in plane crash investigations.

Four Malaysian officials including the head of civil aviation are in Paris together with officials from Malaysia Airlines for a meeting on Monday with three French magistrates and an official from France's civil aviation investigating authority BEA.

Debris won't solve mystery

Truss has warned that even if the debris confirmed to come from MH370 it is unlikely to completely clear up one of aviation's greatest puzzles.

The mystery of what happened to the plane and where it went down exactly are still likely to persist unless the black box is found.

Australian search authorities leading the hunt for the aircraft some 4,000km from La Reunion are confident the main debris field is in the current search area.

For the families of the victims, torn between wanting closure and hoping that their loved ones are somehow still alive, the discovery of the part has been yet another painful twist on an emotional rollercoaster.

While it is unclear whether it was a piece of plane door that was found, Nur Laila Ngah, the wife of the flight's chief steward Wan Swaid Wan Ismail, said she hoped it was.

"It is good news. But it still hurts. But it has been hurting for so long. We need the closure and all the evidence possible so that we can go ahead with our lives. It's been so long," she said. – AFP, August 2, 2015.

<http://www.themalaysianinsider.com/malaysia/article/new-debris-found-on-island-in-hunt-for-mh370-answers>