

## **Search team hits out at US firm over MH370 'debris' claim**

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The team leading the search for Malaysia Airlines flight MH370 has criticised a US firm which wanted it to re-investigate two areas in the remote Indian Ocean where sonar pictures showed what could be debris from the plane, UK's Daily Express reported

In ruling out the possibility, experts at The Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) called the theory by Williamson & Associates "unprofessional", insisting that the images could be "little more than undersea rocks".

"We consider it unprofessional to draw conclusions based on the limited information provided by the images in the search update report.

"There are no indications that there is anything possessing the characteristics of an aircraft debris field and, therefore, a visual imaging run at very low altitude was unnecessary.

"We know that this kind of public commentary is very distressing for the families of those on board the aircraft," an ATSB spokesman was quoted as saying.

US firm Williamson & Associates had said on Monday that two images of the southern Indian Ocean floor released by the ATSB earlier this month bore a striking similarity to the underwater debris field Air France Flight 447 left on the Atlantic Ocean floor when it crashed in 2009, killing all 228 passengers and crew.

The ATSB provided images of the two sites as part of an update in which it also said a re-scan of the areas indicated they were not related to MH370.

Experts involved in past deep-water searches have said the hunt could easily miss the plane because Dutch company Fugro NV was using inappropriate technology and inexperienced personnel for the highly specialised task.

Williamson and Associates "believes the target (sonar image) bears the hallmarks of a classic high-impact debris trail similar to other wrecks it has located", it said in a research paper obtained by Reuters.

The ATSB said in a written response to Reuters that geophysicists, sonar data specialists and its quality assurance team were satisfied that the structures in the sonar records were "consistent with the surrounding geological formations".

"Based on analysis of all of the data, there are no indications that there is anything possessing the characteristics of an aircraft debris field," it said.

The search for MH370 is now the most expensive in aviation history, but has yet to find any trace of the ill-fated airplane.

MH370 went missing en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8 last year. The Boeing 777 jet is presumed to have gone down in the southern Indian Ocean together with the 239 people on board.

A piece of the plane found washed up on the French island of Reunion in July provided the first direct evidence that the plane had crashed into the sea. No further trace has been found. – October 23, 2015.

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