Beat: News

Satellite imagery shows possible debris fields in search for missing airliner

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USPA News - Analysts pouring through satellite imagery of the southern Indian Ocean have discovered more than 120 potential objects that may be linked to Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 which is believed to have crashed in the region, Malaysian officials said on Wednesday. Malaysian Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein said at a press briefing that satellite images taken by France`s Airbus Defence and Space on March 23 showed 122 "potential objects" about 2,557 kilometers (1,588 miles) west of Perth in Australia, the region where Malaysian authorities believe Flight 370 crashed after it went missing earlier this month.

"[The Malaysian Remote Sensing Agency (MRSA)] analyzed the images and - in one area of the ocean measuring some 400 square kilometers (154 square miles) - were able to identify 122 potential objects," Hishammuddin said. "Some objects were a meter (3.2 feet) in length, others were as much as 23 meters (75.4 feet) in length. Some of the objects appeared to be bright, possibly indicating solid materials." Satellite images released by MRSA appeared to show at least three possible debris fields, but Hishammuddin emphasized that it was not yet clear whether they are related to the missing plane. "This is another new lead that will help direct the search operation. It is now imperative that we link the debris to MH370," he said. The search for the aircraft continued Wednesday on its 19th day with a team of six countries, including Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Japan, China and South Korea. The search area has been divided into two sectors - West and East - where seven military aircraft, five civilian aircraft and several ships searched for debris throughout the day. No objects had been recovered as of late Wednesday. "Australia is leading the search effort in the southern Indian Ocean, based out of Perth. All countries involved are displaying unprecedented levels of cooperation, that has not changed," Hishammuddin said. He added that weather in the search area had improved since Tuesday, allowing vessels to return. Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, a Boeing 777, was operating a flight between Kuala Lumpur and Beijing with 239 people on board when it disappeared from civilian radar in the early morning of March 8. It was flying above the South China Sea when it was last detected by air traffic controllers, but investigators believe the aircraft continued to fly for nearly seven more hours under unknown circumstances. Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said on late Monday that further calculations of satellite data indicated that the aircraft had crashed west of Perth with no possibility of survivors. "This is a remote location, far from any possible landing sites. It is therefore with deep sadness and regret that I must inform you that, according to this new data, flight MH370 ended in the southern Indian Ocean," he said at a news conference.

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