

Beat: Miscellaneous

Debris found on Australian beach not linked to missing Malaysian airliner

-, 24.04.2014, 21:44 Time

USPA News - Material that was found on a beach in southwestern Australia this week is not related to the missing Malaysian airliner that is thought to have crashed in the southern Indian Ocean, authorities said on Thursday after examining photos of the material. The unidentified material had washed ashore on a beach about 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) east of Augusta in Western Australia on Wednesday, after which a member of the public handed it to police.

The discovery prompted officials to investigate whether the material is associated with missing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370. "The ATSB (Australian Transport Safety Bureau) examined the forensic photographs of the material to see if it has any relevance to the search of MH370," said ATSB Chief Commissioner Martin Dolan. "After careful and detailed examination by investigative experts, our assessment is that the material is highly unlikely to be related to MH370 and will not be used in the search for the missing aircraft." Dolan said the ATSB, which also provided the forensic photographs to Malaysian authorities, is taking all suspected leads in the search for the missing aircraft "very seriously." In other developments on Thursday, the Australian government's Joint Agency Coordination Center (JACC) said the Bluefin-21 autonomous underwater vehicle (AUV) had completed its 12th mission in the underwater search area. "Bluefin-21 has now completed more than 90 percent of the focused underwater search area. No contacts of interest have been found to date," JACC said in a statement. The underwater search area is defined as a circle with a radius of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles) around the location where the Towed Pinger Locator detected a possible signal from Flight 370's black box on April 8. In addition to the underwater search, a total of 11 military aircraft and 11 ships were carrying out Thursday's visual search in an area covering nearly 50,000 square kilometers (19,300 square miles). Malaysia Airlines Flight 370, a Boeing 777 with 239 people on board, was operating a flight from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing 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 before crashing in the southern Indian Ocean west of Perth.

Article online:

<https://www.uspa24.com/bericht-2135/debris-found-on-australian-beach-not-linked-to-missing-malaysian-airliner.html>

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Official Federal Reg. No. 7442619