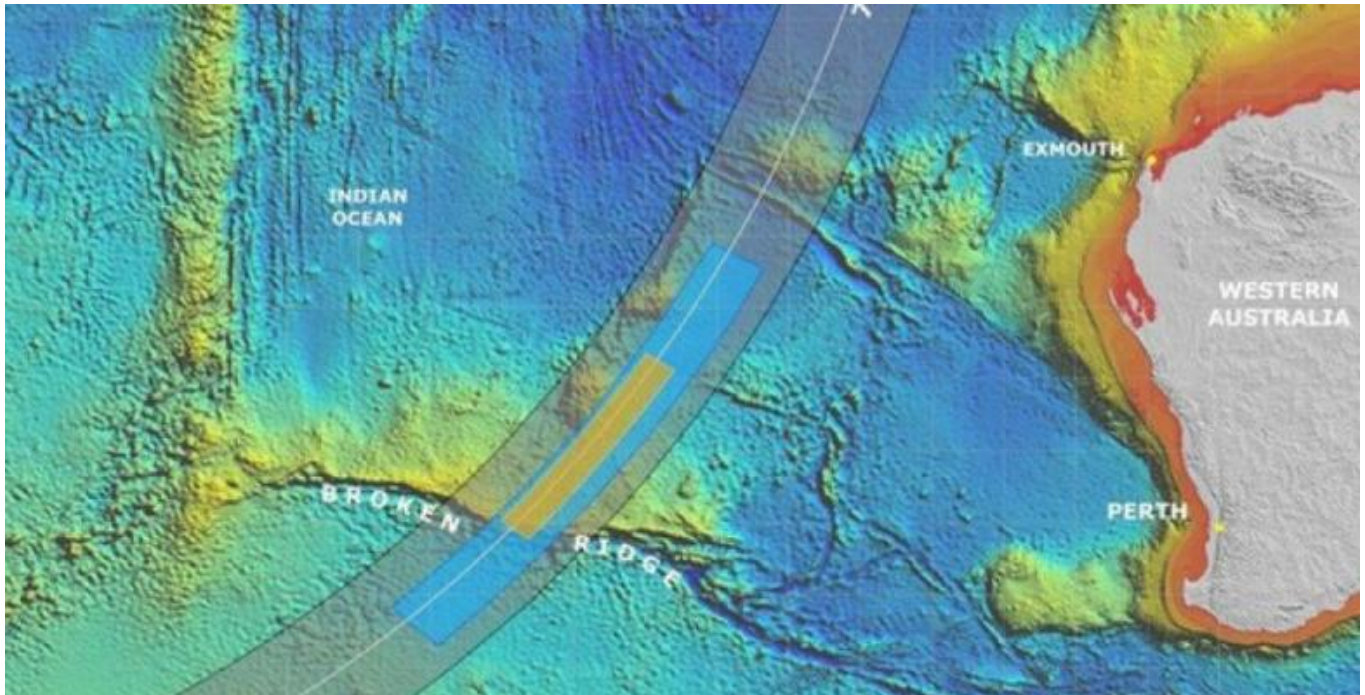

New missing Malaysian plane MH370 search area announced

26/06/2014



The search will now shift south to focus on an area 1,800km (1,100 miles) off the west coast of Australia, Deputy Prime Minister Warren Truss confirmed.

Flight MH370 vanished en route from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on 8 March with 239 passengers on board.

Officials said they believed the plane had been on autopilot when it crashed.

[A 64-page report](#) released by the Australian government concluded that the underwater search for the plane should resume in the new 60,000 sq km area.

An extensive search of the ocean floor was conducted in April after several acoustic pings, initially thought to be from the plane's flight data recorders, were heard. However, officials now believe the pings were not caused by the plane.

"It is highly, highly likely that the aircraft was on autopilot otherwise it could not have followed the orderly path that has been identified through the satellite sightings," Mr Truss said.

Analysis: [Refined analysis drives new move](#), Jonathan Amos, science correspondent, BBC News

The new search area focuses on the "7th arc" - a line through which the analysis suggests the jet had to have crossed as it made a final, brief, connection with ground systems. The

interpretation of the data is that this "electronic handshake" was prompted by a power interruption onboard MH370 as its fuel ran down to exhaustion. As auxiliary power came on, the jet tried to log back into the satellite network.

In normal circumstances following such a logon request, there would usually have been additional "chatter" between the network and MH370. That these connections are not seen in the data log are a very strong indication that the jet was in its crash descent.

Several teams within the investigation have been running the numbers; this is not the sole work of the satellite system's operator - Inmarsat.

The collective opinion of several independent teams has therefore arrived at a zone of highest priority covering some 60,000 sq km. Once the ocean floor there is mapped, the investigation team can then summon the best - but also the most appropriate - submersibles in the world to go hunt for sunken wreckage.

Expensive search

The underwater search for the plane was put on hold to allow more time for survey vessels to map the ocean floor.

The new search is due to commence in August and is expected to be completed within a year, Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) chief Martin Dolan confirmed.



Relatives of Chinese passengers met in Beijing earlier this month to pray for the plane's discovery

Submarines will scour the ocean floor to look for signs of the missing Boeing 777. The area has already been searched by air, and officials say any floating wreckage will have sunk to the ocean floor.

Several teams working independently of each other have reached similar conclusions relating to

the new search area, the BBC's science correspondent Jonathan Amos says.

The search for the missing airliner is already among most expensive in aviation history.

After more than 100 days since the disappearance of the airliner, many of the relatives of the missing passengers have continued to express frustration at the lack of progress in the search.
