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Data Show Missing Plane Flew On for Hours

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By JASON NG And GAURAV RAGHUVANSHI

Updated March 13, 2014 5:14 p.m. ET

KUALA LUMPUR—Malaysian aviation officials said Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 could have flown for several hours despite vanishing from radar, but they said they had received no data indicating this, saying that the data for suggesting an extended flight don't exist.

Malaysian officials disagreed with a Wall Street Journal report that said U.S. investigators suspect—based on engine-monitoring data—that the missing Malaysian plane remained in the air four hours past the time of its last confirmed location. The officials said that all possibilities were still open.

Acting Transport Minister Hishammuddin Hussein confronted the growing criticism of Malaysia's search-and-rescue effort in a news briefing six days into the flight's disappearance and said that he was aiming to set the record straight on what he described as "inaccurate reports."

The Wall Street Journal cited U.S. investigators as saying that they suspected that Flight 370 stayed in the air for four hours after it disappeared from radar, according to two people familiar with the matter, raising the possibility that the plane could have flown on for hundreds of additional miles.

The article said that investigators and national-security officials believe the plane flew for a total of five hours, based on data automatically downloaded and sent to the ground from the [Boeing 777](#) jet's engines, manufactured by Rolls-Royce, as part of a routine maintenance and monitoring program.

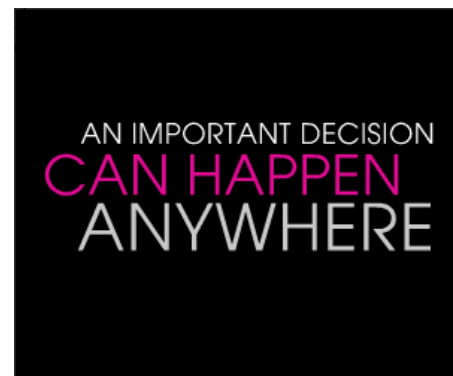
[Malaysia Airlines](#) 3786.KU +2.13% CEO Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said that based on the airline's records, the last transmission was at 1:07 a.m. Saturday, slightly earlier than the time that officials have said the airliner disappeared from radar as it was flying northward over the South China Sea.

"It did not run beyond that," Mr. Ahmad said, adding the data were downloaded periodically. "We have contacted both possible sources of the data, Rolls-Royce and Boeing, and both said they did not receive the data."

Mr. Ahmad said that "the last transmission received states that everything was operating normally."

Boeing officials declined to comment on the Malaysian remarks or, earlier, on the suspicions raised by the U.S. investigators. Rolls-Royce couldn't be reached to comment on the news conference and had earlier decline to comment on the report.

Civil aviation authorities have said that Flight 370's radar transponder inexplicably stopped sending out signals to the country's secondary radar at 1:21 a.m. and that it disappeared from primary radar eight minutes later. An unidentified blip showed up on military radar at about 2:15 a.m. over the Strait of Malacca, hundreds of miles to the



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west of the original flight plan. Officials have been trying to corroborate whether it was Flight 370.

Mr. Hishammuddin said that Malaysia hadn't ruled out that the plane continued to fly on after it disappeared over the South China Sea. "We have not ruled it out, far from it," Mr. Hishammuddin said. "Like I said, any possibility, and that's why we're expanding our search area."

Malaysia and nine other nations are searching areas of the South China Sea between Vietnam and Malaysia, on the east side of the Malaysian Peninsula, and over the Strait of Malacca on the west side, as well as over land.

Mr. Ahmad was asked whether it was possible for anyone to manually turn off systems that send the signals. "Anything is possible," he said. "You can have a total electrical failure on the systems that basically it would not transmit anything."

Three of Malaysia's closest neighboring countries said Thursday that they hadn't spotted a vanished Malaysia Airlines plane beyond its last confirmed position.

Mr. Hishammuddin said the Malaysian government had asked Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam to reveal whether they had picked up any sign of the missing aircraft early Saturday.

Indonesia's Director-General of Civil Aviation, Herry Bakti, said that Jakarta volunteered civilian radar information to Malaysia "even before they asked us."

Mr. Bakti said Indonesia picked up a signal from Flight 370 from a ground station on Batam Island, near Singapore. It dropped at the point where the aircraft also disappeared from Malaysian radar.

Vietnamese authorities said that they at no point detected the plane.

"Vietnamese military radars haven't discovered anything related to the plane since its disappearance," said Vo Van Tuan, the deputy chief of staff of the Vietnamese People's Army. While the aircraft was never picked up by Thailand's civilian radar, Royal Thai Air Force spokesman Monthon Satchukorn said that military radar had briefly detected the plane as it traveled along its planned flight path.

Singapore declined to comment.

—Trefor Moss
and Wilawan Watcharasakwet
contributed to this article.

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