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AirAsia QZ8501 black box search 'challenging': MOT officer

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By Haikal Latiff and Goh Chiew Tong, Channel NewsAsia
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Officers from the Maritime Port Authority of Singapore, specialists from the Ministry of Transport's Air Accident Investigation Bureau and two officers from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore have returned home after their deployment to aid in the search efforts.



SINGAPORE: Six officers from the Maritime Port Authority of Singapore (MPA), four specialists from the Ministry of Transport's Air Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) and two officers from the Civil Aviation Authority of Singapore (CAAS) who were deployed in the multinational search for AirAsia QZ8501 have returned home.

They arrived at Changi Airport earlier on Thursday (Jan 15), after spending two weeks assisting Indonesian authorities in the search and recovery of the flight's black-box data recorders.

The search was "challenging in the rough seas", said Mr Chong Chow Wah, Senior Investigator, Head of Operation, AAIB. "In fact, for the first deployment, we had to pull back because of waves of more than three metres. That was really, really tough," Mr Chong said.

However, the second deployment was more successful, and the team was able to hear the ping of a black box underwater using hydrophones, said Mr Chong.

Specialists from AAIB helped Indonesian authorities detect pings from the black box data recorders using hydrophones, while MPA officers deployed their side scan sonar and remotely operated

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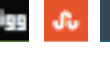






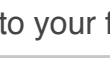


























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vehicle (ROV) to verify the wreckage underwater. They operated from Indonesian vessels KN Jadayat and KN Andromeda. Both teams then shared the information with Indonesian authorities.

MPA deputy chief hydrographer Jamie Chen said the MPA acted as the "eyes" of the search operation, while AAIB acted as the "ears". "It was team work. We managed to locate the pings quite quickly with the Indonesians," said Mr Chen.

Officers from CAAS also worked with the Indonesian National Search and Rescue Agency (BASARNAS) in Jakarta to assist in the coordination for the search operations.



Transport Minister Lui Tuck Yew was at Changi Airport to welcome the teams home. He commended the teams and praised Indonesia for handling the crisis well. "It has been a very challenging and difficult deployment for them," said Mr Lui. He noted that the search was difficult emotionally and physically demanding.

"I want to acknowledge the tremendous efforts that they have put in. It really made a great contribution. But I want to also acknowledge that we had a very strong foundation of a relationship with our respective Indonesian counterparts that have been built up over the years. The Indonesians themselves did a really, really sterling job. Very much in control of the situation, and are working together with other multinational partners to help us able to advance the search and recovery phase," Mr Lui added.

The first black box - the flight data recorder - was found on Sunday (Jan 11). It contains information about the aircraft's performance, including air speed and cabin pressure. The second black box, the cockpit voice recorder, was found on Tuesday (Jan 13), not far from the first black box. It records all sounds on a plane's flight deck.

Both devices have been sent to Jakarta for investigators to understand what happened onboard AirAsia flight QZ8501.

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