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WINNER OF TWO  2013 PULITZER PRIZES

China-bound jet disappears

• Two hours after taking off, flight from Kuala Lumpur with 239 people on board lost communication.

By KEITH BRADSHAW
New York Times

HONG KONG — Malaysia Airlines lost contact with one of its flights, which was carrying 239

people to Beijing from Kuala Lumpur, and had activated a search-and-rescue team, the airlines announced Saturday.

The plane, a Boeing 777-200 operating as Flight MH370, took off at 12:41 a.m. local time. Air traffic control in Subang, a suburb of Kuala Lumpur, lost contact with the plane almost two hours later, at 2:40 a.m.

The airline issued its state-

ment at 7:24 a.m. after the plane failed to arrive in Beijing at its scheduled 6:30 a.m. time.

Malaysia Airlines said the flight had 227 passengers, including two infants, and a crew of 12. More than 150 Chinese and four Americans were aboard the plane.

Airline staff members had begun contacting the families of passengers and crew.

"Our team is currently calling the next-of-kin of passengers and crew. Focus of the airline is to work with the emergency responders and authorities and mobilize its full support," Malaysia Airlines CEO Ahmad Jauhari Yahya said in a statement. "Our thoughts and prayers are with all affected

Plane continues on A6 ►

China-bound jet vanishes with 239 people on board

◀ PLANE FROM A1

passengers and crew and their family members."

Chinese officials expressed concern.

"We are currently in contact with relevant parties and are doing what we can to understand and confirm relevant circumstances," Qin Gang, spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry, said in a statement.

He added that the Foreign Ministry and the Chinese Embassies in Malaysia and Vietnam had begun emergency procedures. If the flight was traveling in a straight line, it would have been traveling north up the entire length of Vietnam and Vietnam's coastal waters.

Fuad Sharuji, Malaysia Airlines' vice president of operations control, told CNN that the plane was flying at an altitude of 35,000 feet and that the pilots had reported no problem with the aircraft. He said the aircraft's last communication was over the South China Sea between Malaysia and Vietnam.

VnExpress, a newspaper in Vietnam, quoted Pham The Hien, director of a Vietnamese search and rescue center, as saying that the last signals received by Vietnamese authorities from the aircraft were from a location 120 nautical miles southwest of Ca Mau. The article did not specify whether it was referring to the southernmost city in Vietnam or the province of the same name.

Chinese air traffic control authorities said the plane had not entered airspace that they manage or established communications with Chinese air traffic control, according to state-owned China Central Television.



LAI SENG SIN • Associated Press

Ahmad Jauhari Yahya, Malaysia Airlines chief executive, said the next-of-kin of passengers and crew had been notified.



A Malaysian man who said he had relatives on board the missing Malaysia Airlines plane talked to journalists at Beijing's International Airport.

In the terminal at Beijing International Airport, where Flight MH370 had been due to arrive, a woman burst into tears while on a telephone.

Liu Meng, 26, said he had been at the airport since shortly before the flight's scheduled arrival time, waiting for his boss to return from a business trip. The boss' relatives had been calling Liu with questions, and, he said, he had nothing to tell them.

A Malaysian man who gave only his surname, Zhang, said that he had been waiting at the airport for two Malaysian friends on the flight but that the airport authorities had

told him only that the flight had been delayed; he had learned of the aircraft's disappearance from the Internet.

There have been two previous crashes of Boeing 777s. Last July, three people were killed when an Asiana plane crash-landed at San Francisco International Airport. So far it does not appear there was a mechanical problem.

In 2008, a British Airways 777 came in short of the runway at Heathrow in London. Both engines of the plane had failed. Nobody was killed.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.