

Rural & Regional Affairs and Transport Legislation Committee
ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
 Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016
Infrastructure and Regional Development

Question no.: 101

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Australian ships – injuries/deaths – 2013-2015

Proof Hansard Page: 15 (28 May 2015)

Senator Gallacher, Alex asked:

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Senator GALLACHER: Perhaps if you could just take this one on notice. Could you provide the last two years of injuries, deaths and accidents on Australian crewed ships that you have had to set your organisation's mind to?

Mr Dolan: Yes. We will work with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority on that. It also relates to things where a vessel is not on a voyage where we do not have much of a mandate. They are really work health and safety issues. But we will do our best to give you a comprehensive picture, working with AMSA on that.

Answer:

Through AMSA reporting channels, the ATSB routinely receives notification of incidents, accidents and safety occurrences involving intrastate or international heavy marine transport. Of reports received across the two years from April 2013 to April 2015, the following 19 events involved injuries to crew or passenger/s of *Australian-flag ships*, or Australian shore-based workers (stevedores, pilots or contracted technicians).

In most instances, the ATSB occurrence data does not identify the nationality or residency status of the individual/s involved, however the AMSA data does record whether the affected individuals were Australian nationals or residents.

Affected party	No. of events	Comments
Crew-member injuries	13	One event investigated by ATSB: MO-2014-013. Two events likely resulted from pre-existing medical conditions.
Shore-based worker injuries	4	3 x contractor, 1 x Australian pilot (ATSB investigation MO-2013-008)
Passenger injuries	Nil	
Crew-member fatalities	Nil	
Shore-based worker fatalities	1	Stevedore (ATSB investigation MO-2014-004)
Passenger fatalities	1	Event likely resulted from a pre-existing medical condition exacerbated by a fall while on-board.
	19	

In regard to the *crew-member* injuries sustained, all were reported as occurring during workplace activities (i.e. none were sustained while the crew-member was off duty), with the origin of these injuries typically being:

- Crushed by object/s (3 events)
- Struck by objects (2 events)
- Chemical burns (2 events)
- Thermal burns (2 events)
- Manual handling strain
- Electric shock

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Question no.: 102

Program: n/a

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Breakdown in air traffic control coordination

Proof Hansard Page: 21 (28 May 2015)

Senator Xenophon, Nick asked:

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Senator XENOPHON: No. I am not trying to do circle work. This is important. Will the ATSB at least look at the publicly available information on WebTrak out of the two airports for that three-hour period to see whether there was a loss of separation assurance?

Mr Dolan: We thought it was more effective to ask Airservices to take a look at the tapes and to provide us with their view as to whether there had been a loss of separation assurance.

Senator WILLIAMS: How long would it take you to look at what Senator Xenophon is requesting? How long would it take you to look at that information? A couple of hours?

Mr Dolan: Possibly. It would need to be done by someone with air traffic control experience so that they could understand it, and we have a range of priorities that we have got our limited air traffic control expertise focused on. This is a matter of the management of limited resources.

Senator XENOPHON: Could you please, Chief Commissioner, take on notice whether the ATSB will be taking this matter any further, at the very least, to look at the WebTrak for that three-hour period out of the Essendon and Melbourne airports, and also whether it would look at radar tapes? Also, it appears, from what has been put to me, that there is a fundamental issue that Airservices did not give you the full story initially.

Mr Dolan: In terms of not being informed of a three-hour period, that is true.

Senator XENOPHON: Does that not worry you, Mr Dolan?

Mr Godley: Could I just clarify something, Senator? We did have one of our air traffic control investigators review the whole three hours. What happened was that after the repcon we got back to Airservices. They reviewed the tapes and said there was no loss of separation or loss of separation assurance. Our ATC investigator then reviewed the three hours. She determined that there was a potential loss of separation between two aircraft. But, due to the limitations of WebTrak, she could not be sure.

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Answer:

The ATSB does not intend taking any further action on this matter, noting that an ATSB air traffic control specialist did review the WebTrak information for the entire period following receipt of the REPCON and that the ATSB is satisfied with the response provided by both Airservices Australia and CASA to the REPCON report (see <http://www.atsb.gov.au/repcon/2013/ar201300090.aspx>).

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Budget Estimates 2015 - 2016

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Question no.: 103

Program: ATSB – Operational Search for MH370

Division/Agency: Australian Transport Safety Bureau

Topic: Reports of low flying aircraft on the Maldive Islands on the day of the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH370

Proof Hansard Page: Written

Senator Rice, Janet asked:

1. Does the ATSB know about news reports of observations of low flying plane during the timeframe in question, and in Malaysian airlines colours? If not, why not (given they are leading the search)?
2. Has the ATSB followed up with any investigation of their own with the government of the Maldives, or local people or authorities, given that news reports exist that provide accounts of people in the Maldives observing a plane flying low?
3. Will the ATSB now conduct investigations in the Maldives and revisit analysis of acoustic data in this area? If not, why not?

Answer:

1. Yes the ATSB is aware of the media reports in March 2014 regarding a low flying plane in the Maldives.
According to media reports, at 6:15 am Maldives local time (0115 UTC) several residents on the island of Kuda Huvadhoo reported seeing a white aircraft with red stripes across it. This time coincided with dawn on 8 March 2014 in the Maldives and was approximately an hour after the final satellite communication with MH370 (0019 UTC), by which time it is strongly believed that the aircraft had exhausted its fuel.
2. The Maldivian Police Force (MPF) has conducted an investigation into the witness claims. The ATSB has followed up with officials in the Maldives who concluded that the aircraft was not MH370.
3. No, the ATSB does not intend to conduct investigations in the Maldives. Neither the timing and location of the witness sightings in the Maldives, nor the acoustic event analysed by Curtin University, match the location provided by the only reliable evidence for the location of MH370 – the satellite communication data. The timing offset provided by the satellite data gives a position of the aircraft on the earth's surface on an arc 3,800 km from the Maldives at 0011 UTC.

The initial analysis by Curtin University of the acoustic event detected just after 0130 UTC on 8 March 2014 on one of the IMOS recorders near the Perth Canyon and at the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organisation hydro-acoustic station at Cape Leeuwin (HA01), indicated while the timing of the event was compatible with the time of the last satellite handshake with the aircraft, the location of this acoustic event was to the northwest in the central Indian Ocean.

This acoustic event may also have been detected at the Scott Reef IMOS recorder and further analysis by Curtin University in September 2014 concluded:

It is impossible to be certain that the Scott Reef IMOS recorder arrival at 01:32:49 UTC is from the same event as the arrivals at HA01 and the Rottnest IMOS recorder that have been analysed previously, however they share enough characteristics that it seems plausible that they are from the same event. Assuming this is the case results in an event location that is near the geologically active Carlsberg Ridge southwest of India. This location, together with the lower amplitude tail that appears to extend at least 100 seconds after the initial onset makes it likely that the event is of geological origin.