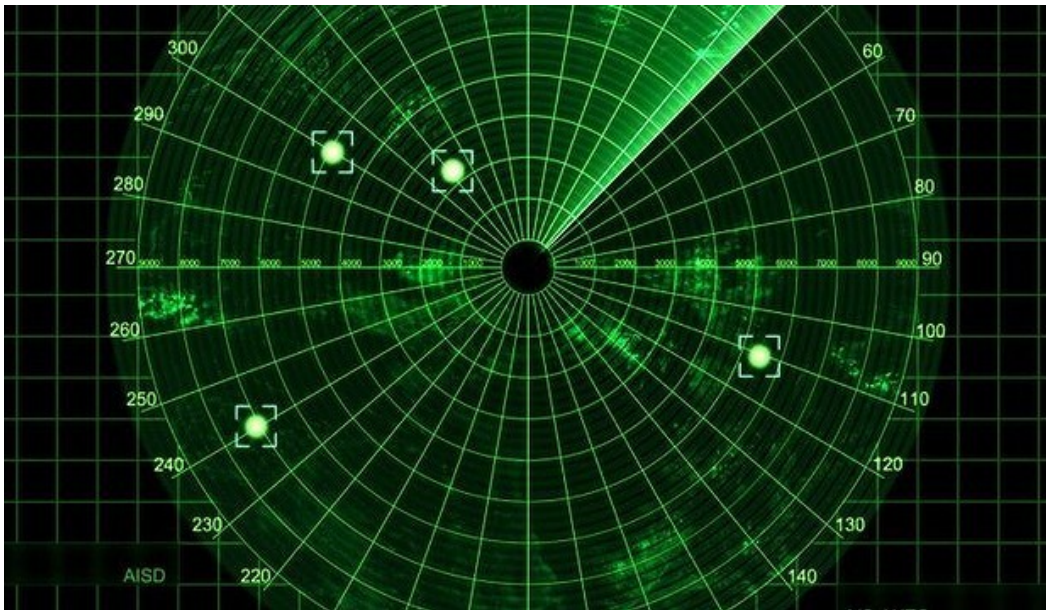


Sunshine Coast plane crash hoax sparks massive search

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[Kristian Silva](#) Brisbane Times journalist



A man pretending to be a pilot radioed Brisbane air traffic control centre on Monday.

Authorities are fuming about a hoax distress call which caused police, a rescue helicopter and commercial airlines to search the Sunshine Coast for a crashed plane that did not exist.

A man pretending to be a pilot radioed in to the Brisbane air traffic control centre about 11.30pm on Monday, claiming he was having problems with his plane's landing gear.

The man's voice is slow and slurred when he tells the controller there are problems with hydraulic equipment on board, according to a recording of the communication obtained by Fairfax Media.

The controller stays calm, telling the man to try and reach the Sunshine Coast where emergency services will meet him.

"It's a very stressful situation. You're doing a good job. Don't worry about what anyone else thinks. Keep flying the plane. I'll get you to the Sunshine Coast and we'll get you on the ground," he said.

However, the man appears to panic in the minutes that follow.

"Not good. I've got a fire warning. I've got a fire warning in the engine...It's getting difficult to fly," the man said.

"I can't see the panel. I can't see the panel.

"We're gone, We're gone, We're gone. Tell them I love them. We're gone. We're gone."

The controller and nearby pilots then make several unsuccessful attempts to contact the plane.

All police in the area frantically began looking for the crash, while the Queensland Government Rescue 500 chopper was tasked to locate the supposed wreckage.

A Singapore Airlines plane and a Toll Freight aircraft also flew over the suspected crash area but weren't able to find anything.

Less than two hours later, the "pilot" returned on the radio assuming a different identity and claimed to be flying another plane named "Wedgetail".

He tells the air traffic controller that his aircraft has "underwater topography" technology and is searching the sea for the wreckage of the first plane.

"We have got contact of interest, a boat, and are watching it very closely.

"Well fitted out, appears to be white, although we are looking at it through infrared so it's hard to know."

However authorities - who by now seem aware of the hoax - show no interest.

An Australian Maritime Safety Authority spokesman said there were "a number" of hoax calls made on Monday, but was unable to provide further details.

"We have referred the information to the Queensland Police Service. It is believed there were hoax calls about aircraft and a vessel. There was a series of calls made to a number of authorities," he said.

"It's a criminal offence to make hoax calls."

Extracted from:

http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/sunshine-coast-plane-crash-hoax-sparks-massive-search-20141028-11d9xd.html?google_editors_picks=true

On 29/10/14 at 08:50:13