

MISSING MH370: Pilot: I established contact with plane Read more: MISSING MH370: Pilot: I established contact with plane - Gene

March 9, 2014 at 12:04am

'INTERFERENCE': Pilot in another plane was flying 30 minutes ahead of MH370
 SEPANG: A BOEING 777 pilot, who was flying 30 minutes ahead of the missing Malaysia Airlines aircraft, said he established contact with MH370 minutes after he was asked to do so by Vietnamese air traffic control.

The captain, who asked to not be named, said his plane, which was bound for Narita, Japan, was far into Vietnamese airspace when he was asked to relay, using his plane's emergency frequency, to MH370 for the latter to establish its position, as the authorities could not contact the aircraft.

"We managed to establish contact with MH370 just after 1.30am and asked them if they have transferred into Vietnamese airspace.

"The voice on the other side could have been either Captain Zaharie (Ahmad Shah, 53,) or Fariq (Abdul Hamid, 27), but I was sure it was the co-pilot.

"There were a lot of interference... static... but I heard mumbling from the other end. "That was the last time we heard from them, as we lost the connection," he told the New Sunday Times.

He said those on the same frequency at the time would have heard the exchange.

This, he said, would include vessels on the waters below.

He said he thought nothing of it, as the occurrence (of losing contact) was normal, until it was established that MH370 never landed.

"If the plane was in trouble, we would have heard the pilot making the Mayday distress call. But I am sure that, like me, no one else up there heard it.

"Following the silence, a repeat request was made by the Vietnamese authorities to try establishing contact with them."

Meanwhile, Ritzeraynn Rashid, 55, remembers Captain Zaharie as a pleasant and humble man.

They used to fly together in the 1980s, when Zaharie was a co-pilot and he, the leading purser on the B737 services.

He was also close with Patrick Gomes, who was leading the cabin crew aboard MH370.

"Zaharie was always smiling and very cheerful. We shared a lot of good memories. We were like brothers.

"From 1980 to 1991, when I was working with MAS, there was never a day that we did not chat and catch up."

Ritzeraynn, who is now a public relations and communications manager, said Patrick was always looking out for his friends.

"I remember those days when I did not have a car. Patrick would offer his new Ford Laser for me to use.

"In reciprocation, when he has late-night flights and did not want to disturb his mother, I would invite him to my house to stay for the night."

Ritzeraynn, who, like Zaharie, was from Penang Free School, said the school's class of 1978/79 would pray for all those aboard the missing aircraft.

"All the crew members and passengers are in our thoughts and prayers. I miss Zaharie and Patrick very much."

For Fariq's brother, Afiq, the bond they had was beyond sharing a last name.

When updated news reached him that his brother, who is a first officer, was co-piloting MH370, his world shattered.

However, Afiq, 20, finds strength in his hope that Fariq, a Langkawi Aerospace Flying Academy graduate, is somewhere out there alive.

"This is just heartbreaking," was all Afiq could muster, telling the NST that he was grappling between thinking of the worst and keeping himself optimistic.



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"I do not know what to tell you. I am not doing okay.

"Sorry, I cannot really think right now. My parents are very sad right now," he said in a text message.

Afiq described his brother, the eldest of five siblings, as a responsible and kind person who exuded warmth, which made him endearing to many.

The chemical engineering student, from Universiti Teknologi Petronas, had earlier tweeted: "Pray for my brother #MH370."

About 7pm, as news on MH370 remained vague, Afiq tweeted: "I'm coming to find you, even if it takes all night."

Their father, Abdul Hamid Md Daud, when met at his house in Shah Alam, asked that the family be given personal space

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