**Beat: Travel**

# Maldives discounts reported sighting of missing airliner

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**USPA News -** A low-flying jet that eyewitnesses claimed to have flown over the island nation of Maldives on the early morning of March 8 was not the Malaysian airliner that vanished during a flight to Beijing, Malaysian and Maldivian officials said on Wednesday. In a statement, the Maldives National Defense Force (MNDF) downplayed Tuesday`s media reports that several residents on the remote Maldives island of Kuda Huvadhoo in Dhaal Atoll had seen a "low-flying jumbo jet" on the morning of March 8. The witnesses claimed the aircraft was white with red stripes, similar to the color scheme of aircraft flown by Malaysia Airlines.

"Based on the monitoring up to date, no indication of flight MH370 has been observed on any military radars in the country," the Maldives National Defense Force said in Wednesday`s statement. "Furthermore, the data of radars at Maldives airports have also been analyzed and shows no indication of the said flight." Malaysian acting transport minister Hishammuddin Hussein also rejected the media reports at a news conference on Wednesday. "I can confirm that the Malaysian Chief of Defense Force has contacted his counterpart in the Maldives, who has confirmed that these reports are not true," he said. The Maldives National Defense Force said it had been monitoring the region with "special attention" since Flight 370 disappeared 1.5 week ago. "The MNDF will continue to render any assistance required by the Maldives Police Service and international authorities on the search for the missing flight and related issues," the statement added. Malaysia Airlines flight MH370, a Boeing 777-200 aircraft, was carrying 227 passengers and 12 crew members when it disappeared over the South China Sea at around 1:30 a.m. local time on March 8. The aircraft had departed Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at 12:41 a.m. and was scheduled to land in the Chinese capital of Beijing at around 6:30 a.m. Speaking at a press conference on Saturday, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak said investigators believe communication systems aboard the airliner were deliberately disabled before the aircraft turned back from its flight to Beijing. Military radar confirmed the aircraft proceeded on a path that took it to an area north of the Strait of Malacca, and satellite data indicates the plane last made contact with a satellite at 8:11 a.m. that morning, nearly seven hours after contact had initially been lost. But it remains unclear where Flight 370 went and how much longer it may have flown, though investigators are now certain that the aircraft did not crash in the South China Sea. Najib said the satellite data does not allow the investigative team to pinpoint an exact location for where the aircraft was when it last made contact with the satellite, but further calculations could refine the search area. "Based on this new data, the aviation authorities of Malaysia and their international counterparts have determined that the plane`s last communication with the satellite was in one of two possible corridors: a northern corridor stretching approximately from the border of Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan to northern Thailand, or a southern corridor stretching approximately from Indonesia to the southern Indian Ocean," the prime minister said on Saturday.

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