

## **French ex-airline boss claims MH370 shot down by U.S.**

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Former airline boss and famous French author Marc Dugain argued Thursday that there had been a cover-up in the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370, speculating that the passenger jet could have been hacked and then shot down by the US.

Dugain, a well-respected French author, argues that the Boeing 777 carrying 239 people crashed near Diego Garcia, a British island in the middle of the Indian Ocean used as a strategic air force and intelligence base by the US military, in the six-page article in Paris Match.

The US has always officially denied that flight MH370 came anywhere near Diego Garcia.

The latest theory into the disappearance of Malaysian Airlines flight MH370 on March 9, 2014 has all the ingredients of a spy thriller and has grabbed the French public's attention.

The former boss of Proteus Airlines travelled to the neighbouring Maldives where residents told local media on March 9th that they had seen an airliner fly in the direction of Diego Garcia. Their claims were promptly dismissed by the authorities.

"I saw a huge plane fly over us at low altitude," a fisherman on Kudahuvadhoo island told Dugain. "I saw red and blue stripes on a white background" - the colours of Malaysia Airlines. Other witnesses confirmed the sighting.

### **Fire on board?**

Dugain speculates - adding to the numerous other existing hypotheses about what happened to flight MH370 - that a modern aircraft such as Malaysia Airlines' Boeing 777 could have been hijacked by a hacker.

"In 2006, Boeing patented a remote control system using a computer placed inside or outside the aircraft," he noted. This technology led Dugain to the idea of a "soft" remote hijacking.

But the writer also suggests that a fire could have led the crew to deactivate electrical devices, including transmission systems.

Whatever the initial reasons for leaving its flight path, Dugain suspects that the plane then headed to Diego Garcia, where a number of scenarios may have played out - including the US Air Force shooting it down for fear of a September 11-style attack.

Dugain met the mayor of neighbouring Baarah island, who showed him pictures of a strange device found on a beach two weeks after the plane had disappeared and before the Maldives military seized it. Two aviation experts and a local military officer concluded that the object was a Boeing fire extinguisher. Dugain points out that for the extinguisher to have floated, it must have been empty, having been automatically triggered by a fire. He adds that precedent exists in which fires on board

aircraft caused all passengers and crew to die of asphyxiation, while the plane's automated systems extinguished the blaze and kept it in the air.

### **Cover-up**

The rest of his article draws more conclusions from the information that has remained buried than from new facts.

The writer notes that the search operation in the southern Indian Ocean was based on satellite data from UK-based Inmarsat - the last organisation to receive a signal from the airliner - which is "very close to intelligence agencies".

For Dugain, the suppression of testimonies from the Maldives, the unlikely event that Diego Garcia's US intelligence officers "equipped with the best technology in the world may have 'lost' a 63-metre-long object", and the secrecy surrounding the cargo in the plane's hold all point towards a large-scale cover-up.

So does the friendly advice of a "Western intelligence officer" - a British one, Dugain said in a radio interview on Thursday - who cautioned him against the "risks" of investigating the flight's disappearance and suggested that he "let time do its work" instead.

The writer's conclusion is that "the only firm belief left from this investigation is that someone knows".

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