

No trace found of missing balloonist

by UPI

ANCHORAGE, Alaska - The U.S. Coast Guard continued its search Tuesday for a Japanese balloonist who vanished south of Alaska while attempting to cross the Pacific Ocean. Michio Kanda sent his last transmission Thursday, reporting that he was at 16,000 feet in rainy weather. Coast Guard air searches have found no trace of Kanda or his balloon, the Starlight, the Anchorage Daily News reported. On Monday, two C-130s from the Coast Guard and the Alaska Air National Guard flew over an area about 435 miles south of Adak Island in the Aleutian chain. Petty Officer Lee Goldsmith said a cutter, the Jarvis, is expected to reach the area Thursday after delays because of bad weather. Searchers had also found no sign of the balloon's locator beacon. Kanda, an experienced balloonist, was trying to break his own distance record by flying 5,600 miles from Tochigi, Japan, to Portland, Ore. The Starlight, described as the world's largest balloon, was equipped with a survival pod, immersion suits and other emergency equipment.

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