

Ukraine Crash Corpses Loaded Into Refrigerated Wagons

July 21, 2014



Monitors (L) from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe inspect a refrigerator wagon, which according to employees and local residents contains bodies of passengers of the crashed Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 plane, at a railway station in the town of Torez, Donetsk region July 20, 2014

Dozens of bodies from the site where a Malaysian airliner crashed in eastern Ukraine were loaded into refrigerated wagons at a rebel-held rail station early on Sunday to be sent home for burial.

But their departure from the war zone was delayed as Ukrainian officials and rebels traded blame over why the train had not yet set off and where or when international investigators would be able to check it.

Western officials have voiced concern about the handling of the remains of the 298 people killed when the airliner crashed on Thursday. More than half the victims were Dutch and the Netherlands foreign minister has said his country is "furious" to hear bodies were being "dragged around."

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry said Sunday what was happening at the crash site was "really grotesque" and called on Russia to ensure investigators are allowed access to the area.

"Drunken separatists have been piling bodies into trucks and removing them from the site," Kerry said on CBS.

Other victims were from Malaysia, Australia, Indonesia, Britain, Germany, Belgium, Philippines, U.S., Canada and New Zealand.

After lying for two days in the summer heat, the bodies had been removed from a large swathe of the crash site by Sunday, leaving only bloodstained military stretchers along the side of the road.

Emergency workers, who have to navigate reporting both to the authorities in Kiev and the rebels who control the crash site and other areas in the Donetsk region, will now need to pick through the debris spread across the Ukrainian steppe.

Delayed Departure

A spokesman for the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, which is monitoring the operation, said rebels had told the team that 167 bodies were in the train and that the monitors had checked three of the refrigerator wagons.

Ukrainian Deputy Prime Minister Volodymyr Groysman told a news conference 192 bodies and eight fragments of bodies had been placed in the wagons, but said the Kiev authorities had yet to get the green light from the rebels for the train to depart.

The rebels responded by suggesting Kiev was delaying their arrival, arguing they could do nothing until the international experts pledged by several countries to help determine what and who caused the plane to crash turned up.

"They will stay there for now, until the issue (of what to do with them) is resolved. We are waiting for the experts," said Sergei Kavtaradze, a senior official of the pro-Russian rebels' self-proclaimed Donetsk People's republic.

Another rebel leader, Andrei Purgin said, with heavy sarcasm, that the investigators must be "walking from Kiev" because it had taken such a long time for them to arrive.

"It was very difficult to get written approval ... for us to move the bodies .. to ensure that later they couldn't say that we savages had left the people in the sun," he said.

Groysman denied that Kiev had put up barriers to the investigators, saying the Ukrainian government was not against them participating in the investigation.

"We cannot officially provide security guarantees on the territory which is controlled by the fighters," he said.

"Therefore each country should decide individually."

He also said that as far as he knew 38 bodies, which local media said had been seized

at gunpoint from rescue workers late on Friday and taken to a local hospital, were most probably now among those on the train.

See also:

[Probe Into Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 Plagued by Difficulties](#)

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