

International Investigators Reach MH17 Crash Site in East Ukraine

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Members of the OSCE mission speaking with Russian border guards on the Ukrainian border on Wednesday.

As fighting continued to rage in eastern Ukraine, an international team of investigators on Thursday managed to reach the crash site of the Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 for the first time since it was brought down by a missile two weeks ago.

Opening the Crash Site

Clashes along routes to the wreckage site between government troops and pro-Russian separatist rebels had kept the delegation from reaching the area to retrieve bodies that have been lying in open fields.

But the investigators were allowed through a checkpoint leading to the crash site at the village of Rozsypne early Thursday afternoon by a rifle-toting militiaman who then fired a warning shot to prevent reporters from accompanying the convoy.

The militiaman, who gave his name only as Sergei, told Associated Press journalists that fighting was still ongoing in Rozsypne.

The team of police and forensic experts, which comprises members from the Netherlands and Australia, are expected to initially focus their efforts on retrieving bodies still on the site and collecting victims' belongings.

Security for investigators has been a major concern as the Ukrainian army continues in its offensive to take back swathes of territory from the rebels.

Kiev's 'Day of Quiet'

National security spokesman Andriy Lysenko said a "day of quiet" was declared Thursday in response to a call for a cease-fire from United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.

"Ukraine has created all the conditions for the foreign experts to work," but the separatists continue to block access, he said.

Ukrainian authorities insist they are concentrating on securing highways surrounding the wreckage site. The aim, they have said, is to gradually squeeze out rebels forces.

But AP reporters near the crash site confirmed Thursday that clashes are taking place in the immediate vicinity of where the Boeing 777 came down.

It remains unclear precisely how many bodies remain at the Malaysia Airlines crash site and what condition they are in after being exposed for so long to the elements. But Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop, speaking to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation from Ukraine, said she has been informed up to 80 bodies are still on the site.

A delegation from Russia's state aviation body said Thursday it also hoped to visit the site, an agency spokesman said.

Sergei Izvolsky told the AP that a delegation of Russian specialists from Rosaviatsiya was due in the Ukrainian capital, Kiev, Thursday to participate in the investigation.

Representatives of the Dutch and Ukrainian commissions would not comment on the arrival of Russian officials.

Yatsenyuk Remains Prime Minister

Ukraine's parliament, meanwhile, voted not to accept the resignation of Prime Minister Arseniy Yatsenyuk.

Yatsenyuk had said last week he was resigning after two parties left the coalition supporting him and parliament balked at passing laws he said were essential to fund the country's war against pro-Russian separatists.

See also:

[More Than 80% of Russians Blame Ukrainian Army for MH17 Crash](#)

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