

Beat: Miscellaneous

Forensic experts identify 10 more victims of MH17 crash

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USPA News - Forensic experts in the Netherlands have this week identified another 10 victims of downed Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, pushing the total number of victims identified so far to 272, the Dutch government said on Friday, nearly three months after the crash. The Dutch Justice and Security Ministry said the remains of 10 additional victims had been identified since the previous update on October 3. It said seven of the newly-identified victims were Dutch nationals while the remaining three had a foreign nationality.

Relatives of those victims have already been notified. In total, forensic experts have now identified 175 Dutch victims, including one Dutch national who also had a British passport, and 97 persons who had a foreign nationality. The nationalities of the foreign victims are not precisely known because the Dutch government previously agreed to withhold the breakdown of foreign nationalities. "At the request of the embassies of the countries involved, the specific nationalities of victims who are not Dutch will not be released," the ministry said in a statement. "A team of experts is working hard to identify the victims but, as emphasized earlier, it can still take months before each victim has been identified. The media will be notified regularly about the status of this process." Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said one Malaysian victim was among those identified this week, raising the number of Malaysian nationals identified so far to 43. Neil Hulbert, a spokesman for Britain's Foreign Office, said 7 out of 10 British nationals had been positively identified as of September 26. Australia, for its part, has declined to provide a figure but said "substantial progress" had been made to identify Australian victims. Konrad Lax, a spokesman for Germany's Foreign Office, said the German government could not comment on the identification process, but the Dutch government previously confirmed that at least one German citizen had been identified. The remains of one victim from Canada and two from Belgium have also been identified. Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 crashed near the city of Torez in eastern Ukraine on July 17, killing all 298 passengers and crew in the world's deadliest aviation disaster since the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. It is believed the aircraft was downed by a surface-to-air missile which was fired from separatist-controlled territory, but separatists there have denied being responsible. A preliminary report by the Dutch Safety Board said that puncture holes in the aircraft's wreckage suggested that small objects penetrated the aircraft in both the cockpit and forward sections. Holes were also found on the cockpit floor. Through analysis, the damage to the body of the aircraft is consistent with "high-energy objects" piercing the aircraft from the outside, they said. Forensic experts have so far been unable to recover all bodies from the site of the crash due to ongoing fighting in the area. A total of 228 coffins have been flown back to the Netherlands for identification, but some of the coffins contained only partial remains, and it is unclear how many bodies remain unaccounted for.

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