

Beat: News

181 Bodies Found at Crash Site Says Official

MH17 Crash

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USPA NEWS - KIEV: Emergency workers, police officers and even off-duty coal miners "" dressed in overalls and covered in soot "" spread out today across the sunflower fields and villages of eastern Ukraine, searching the wreckage of the Malaysian plane shot down as it flew miles above the country's battlefield.

The attack Thursday afternoon killed 298 people from nearly a dozen nations and left enormous questions unanswered. U.S. intelligence authorities said a surface-to-air missile brought down Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 as it flew from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, but could not say who fired it. The Ukraine government in Kiev, the separatist pro-Russia rebels they are fighting in the east and the Russia government that Ukraine accuses of supporting the rebels all deny shooting the passenger plane down. Moscow also denies backing the rebels. By midday, 181 bodies had been located, according to emergency workers at the sprawling crash site. Ukraine has called for an international probe to determine who attacked the plane and the United States

has offered to help. But access to the site remained difficult and dangerous. The road from Donetsk, the largest city in the region, to the crash site was marked by five rebel checkpoints today, with document checks at each. Separatist rebels who control the crash say they have recovered most of its black boxes and were considering what to do with them. Their statement had profound implications for the integrity of the plane crash investigation. An angry Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott demanded an independent inquiry into the downing. "The initial response of the Russian ambassador was to blame Ukraine for this and I have to say that is deeply, deeply unsatisfactory," he said.

"It's very important that we don't allow Russia to prevent an absolutely comprehensive investigation so that we can find out exactly what happened here." "This is not an accident, it's a crime," he added. For his part, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov dismissed Kiev's accusations that Moscow could be behind the attack. "Regarding those claims from Kiev that we allegedly did it ourselves: I have not heard a truthful statement from Kiev for months," he told the Rossiya 24 television channel. The crash site was spread out over fields between two villages in eastern Ukraine "" Rozsypne and Hrabove "" and fighting apparently still continued nearby. In the distance, the thud of Grad missile launchers being fired could be heard today morning.

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