Beat: Politics

Train carrying MH17 victims arrives in government-held city

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USPA News - A refrigerated train carrying the remains of up to 282 people who died in the crash of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 arrived Tuesday in the government-controlled Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, from where the remains will be flown to the Netherlands for identification. The train departed the town of Torez - near the crash site - on early Monday evening and made a stop in the rebel capital Donetsk before leaving the city at about 5 a.m. local time on Tuesday.

The train later left separatist-held territory and arrived at a complex near the government-controlled city of Kharkiv on early Tuesday afternoon. Malaysian Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said the government was "relieved" that the train had arrived safely in Kharkiv after days of growing anger and frustration about delays surrounding the recovery and repatriation of the nearly 300 victims. "This is an important milestone in relation to the MH17 tragedy," he said. Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, speaking at a press conference in The Hague, said an aircraft will fly from Kharkiv to the Dutch city of Eindhoven as soon as the first victims are ready for transport. "We hope and currently expect that the first flight carrying victims will depart for Eindhoven tomorrow in the course of the day," he said. It was not immediately clear how many victims would be taken on the first flight, but Rutte said the repatriation will be carried out in a number of stages. "We are doing it in stages because this allows preparations for transport to take place in Kharkiv, but also to ensure that the identification in the Netherlands can start as soon as possible," he said. The international police agency Interpol said disaster victim identification (DVI) teams had already begun carrying out preliminary examinations of the bodies, which were labeled and numbered by local emergency services at the crash site before being placed in the train. The Ukrainian government said Monday that the train was carrying 282 bodies and 87 body parts. "Repatriation is being prepared there. The actual identification will take place later in the Netherlands. Most will go fast, we expect, but some identifications could possibly take months," said Ed Kraszewski, a spokesman for the Dutch police team in Kharkiv. Rutte added that relatives of the victims will be notified immediately, before anyone else, when a person is identified. Once the preliminary examinations have been completed and the bodies have been flown to Eindhoven Airport, the remains will be transported by road to the Oudheusden military barracks in Hilversum, about 25 kilometers (15 miles) southeast of Amsterdam. Dutch police will escort the transport along the route, which could take 1 to 1.5 hour. Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 crashed near the city of Torez in eastern Ukraine on late Thursday afternoon, 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 that was fired from separatist-controlled territory.

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