

**MH17 recovery scene like 'invasion of body snatchers', reports Australian daily
Malaysian Insider
July 20, 2014**

The recovery of the remains of the 298 passengers from the ill-fated Malaysia Airlines flight that was shot down over Ukraine has been likened to an "invasion of body snatchers" and a "duel over possession of the dead" by amateurs.

The Sydney Morning Herald (SMH) reported that as helpless international observers looked on, a man who called himself "Commander Grumpy" was running the show with amateurs under a veil of secrecy, confusion and denial.

Describing the scene of recovery as a "farce", the daily said masked gunmen controlled the site where the plane's wreckage, contents and passengers were scattered over fields and villages spanning tens of kilometres, in an area where pro-Russian separatists are currently locked with Ukrainian forces.

Flight MH17 departed Amsterdam for Kuala Lumpur on Thursday with 298 people on board, including three infants. It was believed to have been shot down by a surface-to-air missile, over a conflict zone which other airlines have typically travelled.

Ukraine had accused the separatists of preventing recovery efforts, with bodies lying for more than two days in humid weather.

It claimed that 38 bodies had been taken to a morgue in Donetsk city, where Russian-accented experts were supposed to conduct autopsies.

A rebel commander who claimed he was in charge of guarding the crash site identified himself as Commander Grumpy "because I get grumpy when I spend too much time away from destroying Ukrainian BMPs [armoured fighting vehicles] and tanks. You don't want to see me grumpy".

The Ukrainian National Security and Defense Council spokesman Andriy Lysenko has accused the separatists of hiding evidence inside the remains which could incriminate them in the incident.

"According to the information we have that was done in order to find in the bodies of victims parts of missile which shot down the plane," he was quoted as saying.

SMH reported yesterday that Al Jazeera journalist Nazanine Moshiri saw a refrigerated lorry driven by a rebel waiting to go and collect more bodies.

It said the health minister of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPRR) - the area where the plane crashed - had confirmed to Moshiri the bodies had been moved to the morgue, but later denied it.

"Guards at the morgue told Moshiri they would not move the bodies anywhere, and they were waiting for international experts to arrive," said SMH.

An Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitor speaks to journalists at the crash site of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, near the settlement of Grabovo in the Donetsk region, yesterday. - Reuters pic, July 20, 2014. An Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) monitor speaks to journalists at the crash site of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, near the settlement of Grabovo in the Donetsk region, yesterday. - Reuters pic, July 20, 2014. At the crash site, separatists armed with weapons controlled access to the area, allowing a convoy from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) through after some negotiation.

OSCE spokesman Michael Bociurkiw said they were only allowed 75 minutes before they were told to leave and not to go into the fields.

"There's a lot of security, people with heavy arms, we are being watched very carefully. We are unarmed civilians so we are not in a position to argue heavily with people with heavy arms," Bociurkiw told the daily.

However, Bociurkiw and his 24-member team saw unidentified local emergency personnel removing the bodies.

"There are 'experts' here who brought body bags with them. They are moving the bodies to the side of the road - as far as we can tell no bodies have been moved beyond the crash site.

"We don't know who they are because we are not allowed access to them. They are going about collecting bodies and body parts, putting into them into what look like professional body bags and bringing them to the side of road," Bociurkiw was further quoted as saying.

The editor of Ukraine's leading English daily Kyiv Post, Christopher Miller, wrote on news and entertainment website BuzzFeed that those probing the remains were "a motley mix of local emergency-service workers, civilian volunteers and miners — many of whom confessed to supporting the separatist cause... none had experience conducting such a task".

Miller said he had been told by masked gunmen that they were under the command of the DPR's general prosecutor, Ramil Halikiv.

The daily said the rebel commander who claimed he was in charge of guarding the crash site identified himself to Miller as Commander Grumpy "because I get grumpy when I spend too much time away from destroying Ukrainian BMPs [armoured fighting vehicles] and tanks. You don't want to see me grumpy".

Commander Grumpy told Miller he did not know where the bodies would be taken, reported SMH.

"Maybe they will go here, maybe there," he was quoted as saying.

SMH also reported that TIME reporter Simon Shuster saw workers loading bodies onto trucks after OSCE officials left the site at around 4pm yesterday.

"Workers in filthy uniforms stacking corpses from flight MH17 onto old Zil trucks," he had tweeted.

"All refusing to say where the dead are being taken."

Shuster had described the crash site as "lawless" and that the local mine boss had sent men to help clear the bodies.

Meanwhile, according to BuzzFeed, rebels told the OSCE that their "experts" had been photographing bodies before removing them and would put the photos into a database.

It also reported that freelance reporter Volodymyr Solohub had watched as the local "rescue workers" placed bodies onto non-refrigerated trucks and taking pictures of open-bed trucks.

SMH quoted Ukrainian foreign minister Pavlo Klimkin, upset over the treatment of the bodies, as saying that the action went "beyond any sort of moral ground and moral consideration".

"There were up to 900 separatists guarding the site, and they only allowed Ukraine's experts short and limited access to mark the bodies' location. So far 192 bodies had been found.

"The government had established a nearby city as the best place to put a temporary morgue and victim identification centre, but the separatists had not guaranteed its safety either so no work has yet been done setting it up," the daily said.

Investigators and emergency experts from the US, UK, the Netherlands, Malaysia and Switzerland had arrived in Kiev, but had not been given permission to access the crash site.

Ukraine's Deputy Prime Minister Vladimir Groisman said his government was still in delicate, indirect negotiations with the separatists over access to the site. – July 20, 2014.

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