

Dutch shift focus in MH17 crash to investigating culprits

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The Dutch government said on Thursday that, with nearly all of the victims of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 identified, efforts had shifted to finding those responsible for shooting the plane down as it crossed Ukraine last July.

Foreign minister Bert Koenders said, after meeting counterparts from Malaysia, Ukraine and Australia on the sidelines of a cyber-security conference in The Hague, that there was agreement on pushing ahead with justice.

"Now that we're very far with repatriation (of the victims' remains), investigation and prosecution are becoming more central," Koenders said in a statement.

"The ministers believe that prosecution is not only important for the countries with victims onboard. Civil aviation is vulnerable and every safety violation is a concern shared worldwide."

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 was shot down over rebel-held territory in eastern Ukraine on July 17, and all 298 aboard were killed.

Forensics laboratories in the Netherlands have identified remains of 296 victims and recovered large parts of the wreckage for the investigation.

Prosecutors are testing the theory that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air BUK missile fired from an area held by pro-Russian forces.

Because two-thirds of the victims were Dutch citizens, the Netherlands is leading several post-crash investigations. – Reuters, April 16, 2015.

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