

MH 17 DISASTER

BREAKING NEWS

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Bombs shake search team

**PAUL TOOHEY
DONETSK**

BOMBS exploded only 500m from the Malaysia Airlines recovery mission as it made its way to the crash site for a third day of searching.

Vehicles in the humanitarian convoy shook as several incoming bombs landed behind the convoy as it entered rebel-held territory. The convoy proceeded to a

new location to the southwest of the site, near the village of Rassypnoye.

This is the area where the cockpit of MH17 crashed to earth. There are believed to be numerous human remains at this site.

The media was prevented from observing the Australian and Dutch team at work, but this is understood to be a key location both for what the Australians call "the remaining remains" and to gather

ballistic evidence on how the plane was downed on July 17.

The foreign teams negotiate each morning with the Ukrainian army and rebels to travel from their new base in Soledar through to the crash site. The fragility of the arrangement was evidenced from the near-miss bombing.

The team is now fully equipped with Belgian Shepherd sniffer dogs, forensic experts and cold trucks, which have begun transporting

remains to Kharkiv in north-east Ukraine and then on to Amsterdam.

The searchers are literally working in the middle of a war zone as the Ukrainian army fights rebels who want to secede and create a new country called the Donetsk People's Republic. Rebels hold the lands around the site and the journey from Ukrainian territory through no man's land to the rebel checkpoints and back is tense.

The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe has issued a plea for villagers in the area to return any personal belongings they may have found or removed from bodies around the site.

"We heard incoming artillery and it was too close," said Alexander Hug, deputy chief monitor of the OSCE mission in Ukraine.

The perilous situation highlights the difficulties for investigators as they recover

remains and puzzle together what happened, a task that could take three weeks.

The United States accuses insurgents of blowing the airliner out of the sky with a surface-to-air missile probably supplied by Russia, while Moscow and the rebels have pointed the finger at the Ukrainian military.

Pro-Russian rebels claim to have shot down a Ukrainian spy drone just a few kilometres from the site.

'Goodbye to our perfect little souls'

EMILY MOULTON

"THE only thing worse than the hell beyond hell we are going through is the horrific thought that our family may have never existed."

These were the heartbreaking words from Anthony Maslin who, with his distraught wife Rin Norris and their families, said goodbye to their three "perfect souls" and guiding light, father Nick Norris.

Mr Norris and his grandchildren Mo, Evie and Otis Maslin, 12, 10 and 8, were on board flight MH17 when it was shot down over Ukraine two weeks ago.

Yesterday, hundreds of mourners gathered at Perth's Scotch College to celebrate the lives of the three children and their doting grandfather.

Mr Maslin told those at the private service that despite his unbearable loss, he would choose the "short time" he had with them "over any normal, long-lasting life."

"Our three child-

ren are unblemished, innocent and perfect souls. They are our whole world," he added.

A heartbroken Ms Norris spoke of how her children taught her more about life than she could have ever imagined.

Sobbing uncontrollably, she told how she screamed for her children when she learned she had lost them, and how she could not bear the thought she could never touch them again.

"When their innocent young bodies were shot out of the sky, I stretched out my arms as high as I could and screamed for them," she said.

"I can't touch them, and I can't imagine the memories of their bodies close to mine. The love in my heart will always be open for them. My arms will always be reaching for them."



Anthony Maslin and Rin Norris at a service for their children Mo, Evie and Otis (left), and Anthony's father Nick yesterday.

VIDEO

Watch Rin Norris' heartbreaking eulogy online:

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