

MH17 DISASTER

Teams risk fragile deal with Ukraine army, rebels to search for remains

Blasts rock crash convoy

PAUL TOOHEY
IN DONETSK

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

Vehicles shook as incoming bombs landed behind the humanitarian 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 human remains at this site.

Media were denied the opportunity to observe the Australian and Dutch team at their work.

But this is understood to be a key location both for what the Australians call "the remaining remains" and to gath-

HONOUR
THE DEPARTED

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er ballistic evidence on how the plane was shot down 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 evident from the near-miss bombing.

The team is now fully equipped with belgian shepherd sniffer dogs, forensic experts and cold trucks that have begun transporting remains to Kharkiv, in the northeast of

Ukraine, and on to Amsterdam.

The searchers are 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 in the around crash site and the journey from Ukrainian territory through no man's land to the rebel checkpoints and back in the afternoons are tense.



WAR ZONE: Parts of MH17 in Rassypnoye village.

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HEARTBROKEN: Friends and relatives of the Maslin and Norris family gather at Scotch College in Swanbourne, WA. INSET: Mo, Evie and Otis Maslin. Picture: WILL RUSSELL

Couple farewell their 'perfect 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."

With these heartbreaking words Anthony Maslin, along with his wife Rin Norris and their families, said goodbye yesterday 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.

Today, hundreds of guests gathered at Scotch College to celebrate their lives.

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

For nearly two hours,

guests heard cherished anecdotes of "Mo-man", "Otie" and "Evie" and wise old Nick whose "neglectful" parenting instilled a sense of independence in his children.

A heartbroken Rin read out the exact amount of time she had the "honour" of being Mr Norris's daughter and the mum to her beloved children.

She said they taught her more about life than she could have ever imagined and relished being able to comfort them in their time of need by giving them cuddles.

Sobbing, she told guests she could not bear the thought of never touching them again.

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

"Now I see them only in my head. I can't touch them, I can't feel their warmth, I can't imagine the memories of their bodies close to mine and the love in my heart will always be open for them."

"My arms will always be reaching for them."