

Kiev regime's assault on east Ukraine blocks access to MH17 crash site

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The US-backed Ukrainian government and its armed forces blocked access to the Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) crash site amid heavy fighting in towns in east Ukraine targeted by the far-right US- and European-backed regime in Kiev.

The military operation hit many towns in eastern Ukraine and involved an artillery strike on Horlivka that killed at least 13 civilians. In Donetsk at least three people died in shelling, and civilian casualties were also reported in Luhansk.

Ukrainian troops and tanks entered the town of Shakhtarsk, 10 miles west of the site of the Boeing 777 crash, and fighting was reported in the towns of Snizhne and Torez, the mid-sized towns nearest to the crash site.

There were reports of a mass exodus from Donetsk and an additional 4,600 people moving to temporary camps in Russia Sunday, pushing the total number of refugees in such camps above 31,000, including 11,000 children, and the total of all refugees in Russia to over 142,000.

Military spokesman Andriy Lysenko said that though the Ukrainian army would “soon” oust pro-Russian separatist rebels from the area, investigators would still not be able to visit the site until mines that he claimed have been laid by rebels were cleared. There is no evidence whatsoever of the existence of any mines surrounding the site, however.

With Ukrainian security officials claiming that they needed control over the crash site to prevent pro-Russia separatists from destroying evidence, a military cordon was placed around the area preventing investigators from reaching it. The road leading from the provincial capital, Donetsk, to the crash site northeast of Shakhtyorsk was blocked by armoured vehicles as the civilian body count started to climb.

On Tuesday, the Dutch Justice Ministry had complained that, for a third day, “The group of Dutch and Australian experts did not leave Donetsk for the crash site in east Ukraine. There is currently too much fighting on and around the road to the crash site.”

Underscoring that the aim of the operation was not to “liberate” the crash site, the *New York Times* wrote Monday that, “reporters who visited [the crash site] earlier Sunday said insurgents were nowhere to be seen.” It quoted a “separatist commander at a checkpoint outside Shakhtyorsk, about 10 miles from the crash site,” who said, “The attempts to clear militia from the crash site irrefutably show Kiev is trying to destroy evidence.”

With the MH17 crash site sealed off, on Monday Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott denounced the “shambolic” situation, blaming Russian President Vladimir Putin. Turning reality on its head, he asserted, “There’s no doubt that at the moment the site is under the control of the Russian-backed rebels and given the almost certain culpability of the Russian-backed rebels in the downing of the aircraft having those people in control of the site is a little like leaving criminals in control of a crime scene.”

In effect refuting Abbott’s rhetoric, that same day Australian Foreign Minister Julie Bishop indicated at a press briefing that the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe had secured access to the wreckage site in negotiations with pro-Russia rebels prior to the Ukrainian offensive.

The bloody offensive of the Kiev regime, and not the movement of pro-Russian militias, is emerging as the main obstacle within Ukraine to an investigation of the crash.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte called Poroshenko to ask Ukrainian forces to stop fighting near the crash

site. A spokesman said, “Rutte expressed his concern about the fact it appeared the investigators may today yet again not reach the site. This is important because we want to get to the crash site as quickly as possible to get the victims and bring them home.”

The Netherlands is home to most of the crash victims. As many as 71 bodies still remain unrecovered.

The *New York Times* Tuesday, amid the usual obligatory criticisms of Russia, made clear that Russian-backed separatists had in fact been “driven from part, but not all, of the site” with only “a half-dozen glum-looking and exhausted gunmen hunkered down in trenches on the western edge.”

“One of the fighters in a roadside trench, who gave only his nickname, Trojan, said Ukrainian forces now controlled the village of Grabovo, the site of a field where the main landing gear, the wings and the rear cone of the Boeing 777-200’s fuselage hit. Behind him lay a cargo pallet from the flight. ‘The plane isn’t relevant now,’ he said. ‘We’re being attacked.’”

In addition, the article noted that in Petropavlovka, “the overhead luggage bins from the plane’s business-class section landed in a tree, along with much other debris...”

Local resident Maria Nikolayeva asked, “Why isn’t anybody coming here to pick up the pieces?”

The media is, of course, largely silent on the politically criminal offensive in east Ukraine, along with Washington, London, Berlin and Paris.

The same holds true for the extraordinary delay in issuing any findings from the black boxes handed over by the rebels on July 20 and sent for investigation by an international team of experts in the UK on July 22. The BBC reported that the UK’s Air Accidents Investigation Branch “investigators are confident that, depending on the extent of the damage, they can retrieve information from the boxes within 24 hours.”

Since then there has been no official report—a situation made all the more extraordinary given that prior to the handover, the media was filled with screaming headlines speculating that “vital information” was being either destroyed or had been shipped to Russia.

Instead, on Monday Ukrainian authorities issued claims that data from the black boxes had pointed to “massive explosive decompression” from missile shrapnel. Andriy Lysenko, the spokesman for

Ukraine’s Security Council, told a news conference in Kiev that the information came from experts analysing the recorders from the plane.

Though barely reported elsewhere, Dutch Safety Board (DSB) spokeswoman Sara Vernooij told *The Independent* that Lysenko’s information did not come from them, and that “Bringing out fragmented pieces of information is not on behalf of the investigation,” which would not report its initial findings until August 1.



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