



PRESS RELEASE

AIR CHIEF MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON TO LEAD AUSTRALIA'S RESPONSE TO MH17 INVESTIGATION AND RECOVERY EFFORTS

Air Chief Marshal (retired) Angus Houston AC AFC has been appointed the Prime Minister's Special Envoy and will lead Australia's efforts on the ground in Ukraine to help recover, identify and repatriate Australians killed in the MH17 crash.

He will remain in Ukraine as long as necessary to complete the task.

Once the site can be accessed by international investigators, Air Chief Marshal Houston will coordinate Australia's consular, diplomatic, disaster and crash site investigation response in Ukraine.

He will work closely with local and international authorities on consular support for the families of the Australian victims, on disaster victim identification and on the crash investigation itself.

The first priority will be to recover the remains of the victims and to secure safe and sustained access to the MH17 site.

In close cooperation with the Ukraine government, the International Civil Aviation Organisation and other international partners, Air Chief Marshal Houston will work to ensure a comprehensive investigation into the MH17 crash is swiftly underway.

To date, the Australian Government has deployed 45 officials to assist including 20 personnel from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 20 Australian Federal Police Officers, two Australian Transport Safety Bureau investigators and three Defence officials.

The Australian Ambassador in Warsaw (who is accredited to Ukraine), a regional consular officer and embassy officials from Moscow, London and Warsaw, have also arrived in Kiev as part of Australia's response team.

Other specialist teams are on standby for immediate deployment when access to the site is secured. A C17 military transport aircraft is on standby to depart for Ukraine.

The recovery, identification and repatriation process will be complex and will likely take a number of weeks to complete. This will be a difficult and painful period, and the families of the victims will have the Government's full support.

Our thoughts continue to be with the families of the victims.

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