



MH17

The Coroners Court of Victoria
The Victorian Institute of Forensic Medicine

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Presentation Outline

- MH17 – The background
 - When, Where
- What was the DVI process?
 - The Phase 1 Scene Issues
 - The Phase 2 Mortuary Arrangements
 - The Australian Coroners review of The DVI
 - The phase 3 Antemortem arrangements
 - The Phase 4 reconciliation Arrangements
 - Coroner oversight /accreditation
- Repatriation
- What was different with the MH17 DVI process
- What are some of the Learnings



The Background

- **When**

- 17 July 2014 The event occurred during the Battle in Shakhtarsk Raion, as part of the ongoing war in Donbass

- **Where**

- The Boeing 777-200ER airliner lost contact about 50 km (31 mi) from the Ukraine–Russia border and crashed near Torez in Donetsk Oblast, Ukraine, 40 km (25 mi) from the border, over territory controlled by pro-Russian separatists referred to as the Donbass Peoples Militia.

- **What**

- A scheduled international passenger flight from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur. Pieces of plane, bodies and body parts, luggage and other personal possessions fell from the sky into ‘Ukraine’.
- 298 people died - 283 passengers and 15 crew



BUT “The Conspiracy theories” are out and about already.

MH17 – The Conspiracy!

- MH370 and MH17 are actually the same plane. The first plane, they claim, was hijacked and flown somewhere secret to be stored for a while. It was then rigged with explosives, flown over Donestsk and blown up in order to implicate one of the parties.
- There are others who are busy claiming that the conspiracies are being disseminated by those who are trying to distract us from seeing “the truth”.
- **“A good conspiracy is unprovable. I mean, if you can prove it, it means they screwed up somewhere along the line.”** Said by Mel Gibson’s character Jerry Fletcher in the movie ‘Conspiracy Theory’

The Victims

Nation	Number
 Australia	27
 Belgium	4
 Canada ^[c] ^[34]	1
 Germany ^[d]	4
 Indonesia	12
 Malaysia ^[e]	43
 Netherlands ^[f]	193
 New Zealand	1
 Philippines	3
 United Kingdom ^[g]	10
Total	298



DVI Phase 1 (The Scene)

- **Critical issues**

- Responders had no or very limited expertise in victim recovery
 - Local miners, ambulance and hospital staff, general community
- No forensic control
 - evidence management, documentation & preservation
 - Preservation and security of scene
- No consistent use of Interpol DVI guidelines
- Haphazard numbering and documentation
- Inappropriate interim storage and body preservation (formalin)
- Multiple transportation systems
- Political instability, ?'deliberate obstruction'? of site access
- Very real war zone injury risk to investigators
- Weather conditions, body exposure to environment (insects & vermin)





Town of Grabovo

Primary crash site and debris field

Secondary debris site (tail section seen here)

Debris seen in fields

Probable debris seen in fields about 3km from primary debris field

Security and Control



REUTERS





The Train



Environment of Debris and Remains



Environment of Debris and Remains



LIFE NEWS



СРОЧНО ПАДЕНИЕ "БОИНГА"

Property Management



DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary

- **Transportation to Hilversum**
 - Formal Ceremony
 - Managing Hilversum
- **The Mortuary Process**
 - Managing the environment and staff
 - Hazard Management
 - Forensic investigation
 - DVI investigation
- **Living with DVI**
 - Accommodation
 - Social and Professional support
 - Deployment



DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **Transportation to Hilversum**
 - Formal Ceremony
 - Managing Hilversum







DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **The Mortuary Process**

- Managing the environment and staff
- Hazard Management
- Forensic investigation
- DVI investigation



DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **The Mortuary Process**

- Managing the environment and staff
- Hazard Management
- Forensic investigation
- DVI investigation

- **Procedure**

- Open coffin
 - Test for chemical and biological hazards (Military staff)
 - CT scanning of contents of coffin
 - If suspicious foreign objects - proceed to Limited Forensic Autopsy
 - If no suspicious foreign objects – Proceed to DVI examination area
 - Coffin remains triaged and PM nos. allocated (230+ coffins = 700+ PM Nos.)
 - Each PM No. specimen/body allocated to a DVI examination line.

DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **The DVI examination lines**

- 5 lines

- German (Largely complete bodies and remains with hands)
- Dutch (Largely complete bodies and remains with hands)
- Australian (Largely complete bodies and remains with hands)
- British (Largely complete bodies and remains with hands)
- Malaysian/Indonesian (Body parts line)

- Each Line has 4 stations

- Fingerprinting
- Clothing, Marks, scars, tattoos, prostheses
- DNA sampling, Limited dissection for identification only
- Dental

- Re – encoffining

- Storage



DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **The features of the remains**
 - Property
 - Relative absence of property
 - Loss and damage of looser parts of clothing
 - N.B. the saga of the oxygen mask
 - Decomposition
 - Surface formalin – useless, dangerous, OH&S nightmare
 - relatively fresh
 - Fire Damage
 - All patterns
 - Complete Incineration, partial incineration, unburned
 - Injuries
 - Disruption, intact, complete, variable incomplete
 - Missile injuries rare but present
 - Massive internal injuries with little external signs
 - No haemorrhage around fractures

Daily Debriefing



DVI Phase 2 (The Mortuary)

- **Living with DVI**

- Accommodation
- Social and Professional support
- Deployment

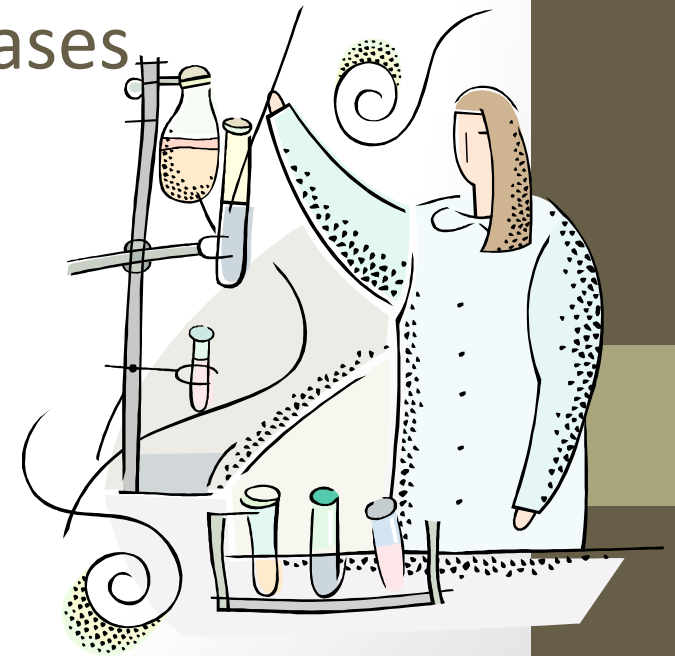






Coroners Oversight

- **Community and Jurisdictional Confidence**
 - Liaison with Colleagues
 - Operational updates
 - Jurisdictional requirements
 - Liaison with Federal Agencies/AFP
 - Inspection and review of the DVI phases
 - Briefing on Phase 1 operations
 - Review of Phase 2 facilities
 - Review of Phase 4 operations



Coroners Oversight

- **Community and Jurisdictional Confidence**

- Repatriation arrangements

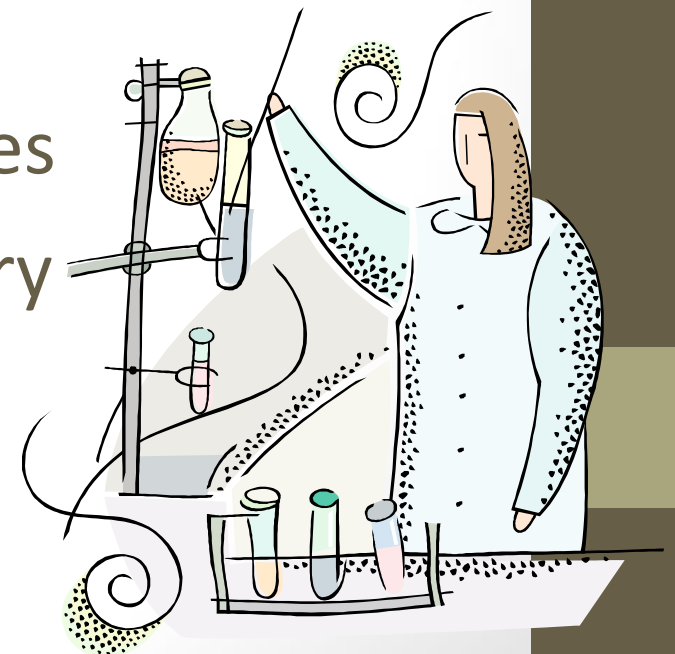
- Transport
- Ceremony

- Ensuring documentation and processes meet jurisdictional needs

- Managing family concerns and wishes

- Support from and with CAE/Mortuary

- Jodie Leditschke, Rebecca Owen etc.





Repatriation



Documents and
identification label checks

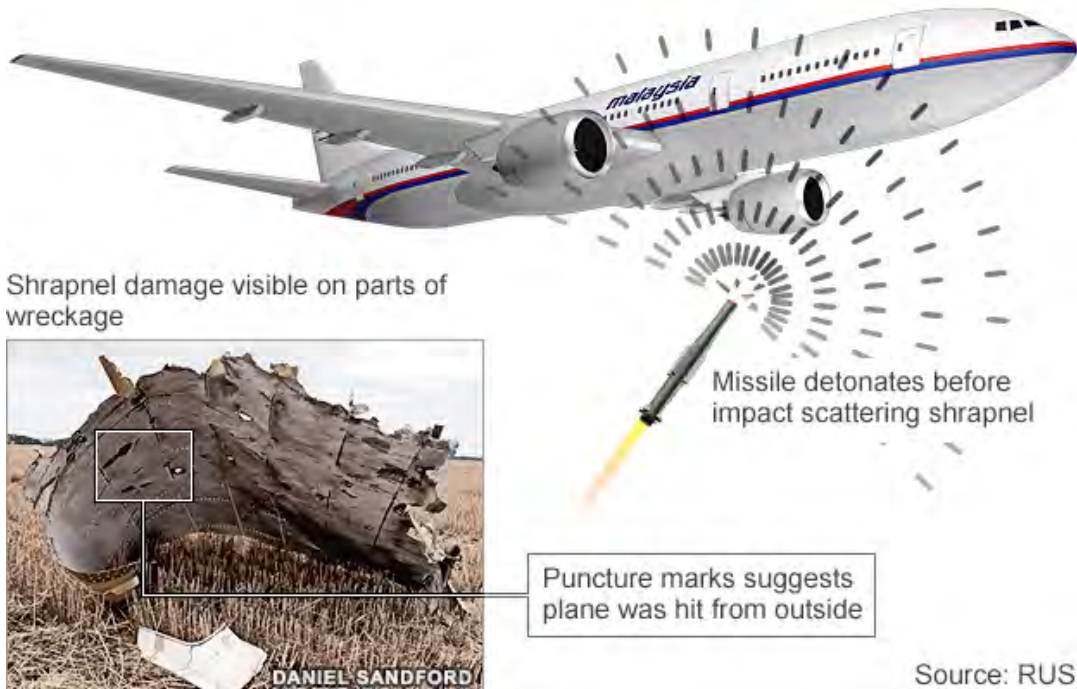
CT scan and photography



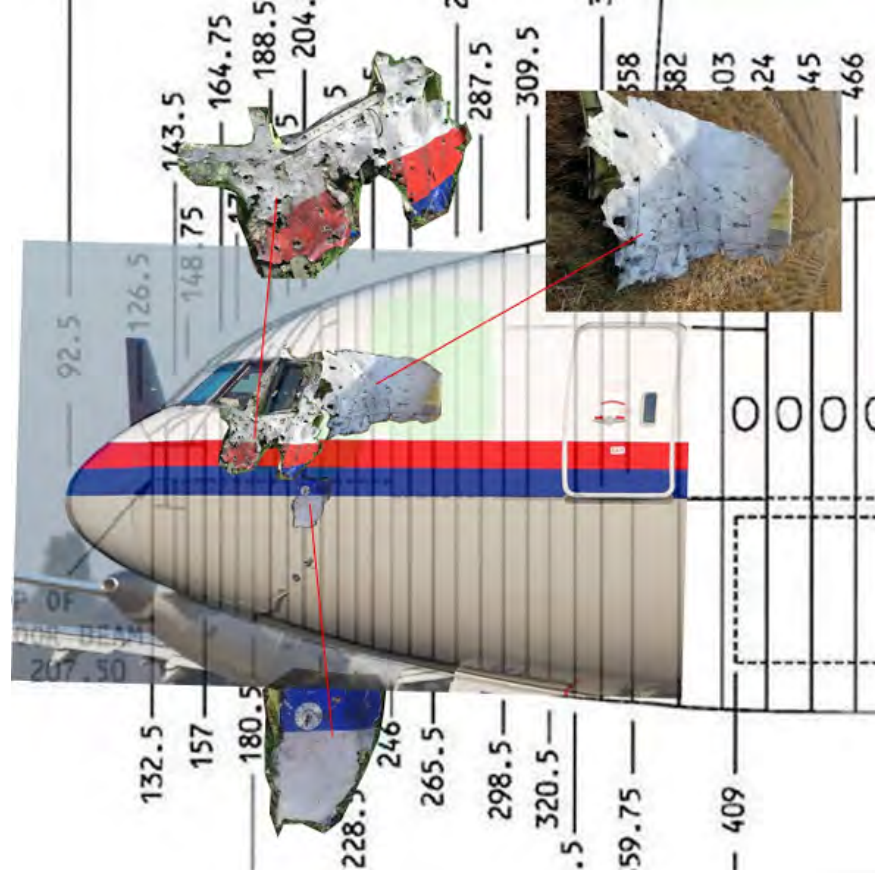
Repatriation

What are some of the Learnings

- **What was different with the MH17 DVI process**
 - Limited Scene access management or control
 - Body remains contaminated with Formalin
 - Setting of Warfare
 - Difficult criminal justice issues
 - 2 Pathology reports
 - Multi-jurisdictional management
 - Complex multiple nationalities in the case of some victims



Source: RUSI



5 OTHER PLANES SHOT DOWN BESIDES MH17



