



**Media Release**

**1 August 2014**

**Safe passage, aftercare urged for MH17 police officers**

The International Council of Police Representative Associations (ICPRA) today urged the responsible governments to ensure safe passage for police officers deployed to the crash site of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 in Ukraine, and to ensure support and aftercare is provided for those involved in the difficult task of victim identification.

“The apparently deliberate bringing down of MH17 is an enormous tragedy, and our first thoughts are with the families of those who have lost loved ones,” said ICPRA Chairman Greg O’Connor. Mr O’Connor is also President of the New Zealand Police Association.

“If those families are to find some sort of closure and be given the answers they deserve, it is absolutely critical that international police officers deployed to assist at the scene are allowed to do their job safely, and without impedance from military forces operating in the area.”

The international deployment of police officers in response to the MH17 tragedy is one of an increasing number of situations in which governments have turned to police, rather than military forces, to safeguard the international community’s interests. ICPRA, as the umbrella organisation for police staff associations and unions internationally, provides an independent voice for the deployed officers.

Mr O’Connor acknowledged and welcomed the determination of the commanders of the Dutch and Australian international contingent in Ukraine to place the safety of police personnel first, including by abandoning efforts four times to reach the crash site while fighting raged in the area. A small number of experts managed to reach the scene via a longer, indirect route, yesterday.



“Two weeks after the downing of the plane, it is increasingly urgent that police be allowed safe access to do the thorough, professional job they are trained to do on behalf of the families of the 298 victims. We implore the military forces in the area to respect this pressing need,” Mr O’Connor said.

ICPRA also drew attention to the extremely demanding nature of the victim identification role being undertaken by police in the Netherlands and Ukraine, including Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) specialists from wide range of nations including those with police members represented by ICPRA such as Australia, New Zealand, the European and Nordic nations, South Africa, and the UK.

“DVI work is extremely challenging, both from a technical point of view, but also from an emotional point of view. Dealing professionally with mutilated and degraded human remains for extended periods – all the while knowing these were somebody’s loved ones, and being determined to provide accurate, final answers so those families can truly begin their grieving process – is extremely demanding. Often the emotional burden of this work is placed aside and does not hit the officers involved until after the job is done. If not proactively managed, the delayed effects can be personally and professionally crippling. That is why it is absolutely critical that the jurisdictions involved are prepared in advance to provide aftercare such as counselling and professional support immediately the job is done,” Mr O’Connor said.

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*About the International Council of Police Representative Associations*

The International Council of Police Representative Associations is an organisation comprising representatives of police and law enforcement associations and unions from around 40 countries, collectively representing more than 1.5 million law enforcement officers across North America, Europe, Africa, and Australasia.



# International Council of Police Representative Associations

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