



INTERPOL DVI Protocols

Following the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH 17 in Ukraine on Thursday 17 July, it was clear that a coordinated international effort would be required in order to identify all 298 victims on board.

The globally accepted INTERPOL **disaster victim identification (DVI)** protocols being implemented during this process will assist the rapid, dignified and accurate identification of victims so that they can be returned to their loved ones.

The INTERPOL DVI protocols have led to the successful identification of thousands of victims of both man-made and natural disasters around the world, most notably after the 2004 Asian tsunami, the 2009 Air France AF447 plane tragedy in June 2009, the Westgate Mall terrorist attack in Kenya and following Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

With passengers and crew from around the world onboard flight MH 17, retrieving, analyzing and matching data in order to accurately identify all 298 victims will be a lengthy process.

1 DVI TEAM COMPOSITION

DVI teams are typically made up of specialists from a number of areas, including;

- Scene of crime officers
- Forensic pathologists
- Forensic dentists
- Fingerprint experts
- DNA experts
- Photographers

2 THE DVI PROCESS

At the very beginning of the DVI process, each victim is photographed and numbered. This number stays with the remains until the formal identification is complete.

The forensic pathologist performs an external and internal examination of the body and enters the appropriate data in the blocks provided in the post mortem form. The pathologist also takes DNA samples.

Primary methods of gathering forensic evidence are fingerprinting, dental records and DNA sampling, although in some cases victims may have medical conditions such as a pacemaker or a hip replacement with a unique serial number which will help as a secondary identifier.

Fingerprints

In most cases, individuals who have their fingerprints on a government or police database are those with criminal records, or residents in a country where a fingerprint is included on the national identity card. In order to obtain the fingerprints of the passengers on flight MH 17, which are not

already in such a database, officers may visit their homes to check items which the person may have touched, for example, a glass of water beside the bed, CD cases, magazines or personal belongings in the bathroom.

Dental records

Most dentists now X-ray patients, and if these are not available, other records of work carried out, such as caps, bridges and fillings can be sent.

DNA

Again, very few people will have their DNA on file, however DNA gathered from close relatives will be able to help with the identification, and where this is not possible, samples can be taken from personal items such as hairbrushes from the victim's home.

All ante-mortem information gathered by national authorities will be sent to the dedicated crisis cell at INTERPOL's 24-hour Command and Coordination Centre. All information is entered into DVI System International, a computer system designed by Danish company PlassData, based on INTERPOL's DVI forms, which assists the comparison of post mortem data against ante mortem data.

Once a potential match is made, the information will be verified by experts to ensure it is correct, and the national authorities of the victim's country are then informed.

The family of the victim will then be contacted to inform them that an identification has been made, and the process to repatriate the body to whichever country can then begin.