

Washington seizes on Malaysian airliner crash in Ukraine to threaten Russia

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18 July 2014

Before any investigation had been carried out, leading US politicians and media outlets seized upon yesterday's terrible crash of a Malaysian Airlines flight in east Ukraine, which cost 295 lives, to legitimize stepped-up threats against Russia, posing the danger of all-out war.

The wreckage of Flight MH17 is strewn over a nine-mile perimeter in an area controlled by pro-Russian militias fighting the Western-backed Ukrainian regime in Kiev. Flight safety experts explained yesterday that the crash could be due to mechanical failure, a bomb inside the jet, or the plane being shot down.

Less than an hour after the crash, however—before even the size and location of the crash site were known—US politicians, American media outlets and the US puppet regime in Kiev were insisting that Russia and its east Ukrainian allies had shot down the jetliner with a BUK missile. Ukrainian Interior Ministry official Anton Gerashchenko told the *Wall Street Journal*: “They clearly thought that it was a military transport plane that they were shooting at. They were the ones who did this.”

US intelligence agencies also claimed the plane had been shot down by a missile, citing satellite data, but without saying who had fired it. Neither Kiev nor Washington presented any evidence, such as satellite images, radar tracking data or eyewitness testimony, to back up their allegations.

Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak—whose country has suffered a second airline disaster this year, after the March 8 disappearance of all 239 people aboard MH370 from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing—called for investigations to proceed. He said: “The Ukrainian authorities believe that the plane was shot down. At this early stage, however, Malaysia is unable to verify the cause of this tragedy ... If it transpires that the plane

was indeed shot down, we insist that the perpetrators must be swiftly brought to justice.”

If MH17 was shot down by a BUK missile system—a Soviet-designed system fielded by both the Russian army (with 250 units) and the Ukrainian army (60 units)—there are three possibilities as to who shot it down. It could be the Kiev regime or the various far-right militias fighting alongside its armed forces, east Ukraine's pro-Russian separatists, or the armed forces of Russia itself.

Russian media reported that on Wednesday, Kiev dispatched anti-air missile batteries to the area around Donetsk, the largest city held by pro-Russian militias. From there, advanced missile systems like BUK or S-300 could have shot down a plane in the region.

Moscow or pro-Russian separatist militias in eastern Ukraine operating BUK batteries with technical assistance from Russian forces could also have hit the jet. The east Ukrainian separatist forces reportedly seized a BUK battery when they captured a Ukrainian military base earlier this week, and they claimed they had shot down a Ukrainian airplane shortly before MH17 crashed.

As to whether Kiev, Moscow, or their allied militias shot down MH17, one can only wait for an investigation to proceed, assuming that the fighting in east Ukraine will allow it to take place. Whoever shot the jetliner down, if it was indeed shot down, the main responsibility for this horrific act lies with the catastrophe unleashed in Ukraine by Washington and its European allies.

The crash took place a day after Washington and the European Union (EU) imposed new sanctions against Russia, amid a bloody civil war in Ukraine in which Washington has backed a far-right, anti-Russian regime in Kiev that came to power in a fascist-led putsch last

February. In the past week, mass graves were discovered in east Ukrainian cities captured by the Kiev regime, and Ukrainian artillery bombarded Russian cities near the border.

Washington has sought continuously to intensify political and military tensions in order to encircle Russia, and, by making the situation ever more violent, counter elements in Germany who, for reasons of their own, are nervous about the subordination of German policy to US interests. US officials and media therefore seized on the crash to demand military escalation in Ukraine, a Russian capitulation to US interests there, and a total alignment of the European powers behind US policy.

The *New York Times* placed all blame on Russian President Vladimir Putin, even though it admitted it did not know who was responsible for the crash. Noting that “it may take a while to fully sort out who is responsible,” it called for an end to the Ukraine conflict, asserting: “There is only one man who can stop it—President Vladimir Putin of Russia, by telling the Russian-backed secessionists in Ukraine to end their insurgency and by stopping the flow of money and heavy weaponry to these groups.”

US Republican Senator Lindsay Graham called the crash a “game-changer,” adding: “You would take the sanctions we’ve unilaterally imposed, toughen them and get the world behind them. Start arming the Ukrainian military, that is what I would do.”

Fellow Republican Senator John McCain said: “I think there’s going to be hell to pay and there should be ... If these are separatists, which are also Russian, Vladimir Putin should be paying a heavy price.”

Aspiring Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton said the European powers now had a responsibility to impose the deep economic sanctions on Russia that Washington has demanded of them. “They must say, ‘Putin has gone too far and we are not going to stand idly by,’” Clinton said. “There should be outrage in Europe.”

Such a policy of deliberately and continuously provoking a major military power armed with nuclear weapons, such as Russia, is immensely dangerous. Already, in the state of heightened military alert and uncertainty provoked by the Ukrainian civil war, engineered by the Western powers, a passenger jet has been destroyed and nearly 300 lives lost.

One must ask: what is the next “unexpected event” in the spiral of escalation in Ukraine, and will it trigger a direct military confrontation between the United States, the EU and Russia involving nuclear weapons?

These events underscore the correctness and the timeliness of the warning made by the International Committee of the Fourth International, in its statement “Socialism and the Fight Against Imperialist War,” that the development of a mass socialist antiwar movement of the international working class is an urgent political necessity.



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