

# Australian political establishment threatens Russia over MH17 crash

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19 July 2014

The entire Australian political establishment has seized on the tragic deaths of 298 people in the crash of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in Ukraine—including 28 Australians—to ratchet up the escalating US-led provocations against Russia.

Before any investigation team reached the disaster site in eastern Ukraine, the Liberal-National Coalition government of Prime Minister Tony Abbott, supported by the Labor Party opposition and the Greens, accused Russian-backed separatists in eastern Ukraine of shooting down the plane, and called for retribution against the rebels and Russia itself.

In an interview with Melbourne-based radio station 3AW yesterday morning, only hours after the incident, Abbott declared that it “seems certain” that the plane was brought down by a “Russian-supplied surface-to-air missile.”

Abbott then proceeded to turn the political reality in Ukraine on its head, declaring: “What’s been happening for many months now is an attempt by Russia to bully a neighbour. Now this is just outrageous.”

In fact, the civil war in the Ukraine, which created the conditions for the tragedy, is the outcome of the fascist-led coup, orchestrated by the US and Germany, which overthrew the elected government in February.

Implicitly calling for massive retaliation, Abbott declared: “I don’t say there are easy responses when a large and powerful country attempts to bully a smaller and less powerful neighbour.”

In a speech to parliament hours later, Abbott warned that “the bullying of small countries by big ones, the trampling of justice and decency in the pursuit of national aggrandisement and reckless indifference to human life should have no place in our world.”

For all the accusations of Russian “bullying of small

countries,” the real attitude of the Australian establishment was revealed by the fact that not a single parliamentarian referred to, let alone condemned, Israel’s bombardment and invasion of Gaza—a war crime against a defenceless and entrapped Palestinian population of 1.8 million people that has already claimed hundreds of lives. (See: “Oppose the Israeli invasion of Gaza”)

Abbott’s denunciations of Russia were immediately joined by Labor opposition leader Bill Shorten, an individual identified in diplomatic cables published by WikiLeaks as a “protected source” of the US embassy in Canberra. Shorten declared that “the missile that brought down MH17—and the missiles that have claimed numerous other Ukrainian aircraft—could not possibly be made by the people who possibly fired them. These separatist terrorists are obtaining these instruments of murder from elsewhere. This must be investigated—and it must be stopped.”

Shorten’s use of the term “terrorist” to label the oppositional and pro-Russian separatist movements in Ukraine directly echoed the rhetoric employed by the right-wing and rabidly anti-Russian and anti-Semitic regime in Kiev.

Shorten issued a blanket guarantee of Labor’s support for any government retaliatory measures against Russia. He stated that Labor “understands the difficulty and complexity of the decisions you face,” and “there will be many understandable calls for all sorts of action.” In particular, he indicated that Labor would support the Abbott government if it refused to allow Russian President Vladimir Putin to attend the G20 summit in Brisbane this December.

Following Shorten, Greens deputy leader Adam Bandt declared: “As the member for Melbourne and on behalf of the Greens, I want to associate myself with

the remarks of the prime minister and the leader of the Opposition.”

As well as seizing on the MH17 disaster to amplify the international demonisation of Russia, the Abbott government is exploiting the tragedy for domestic purposes. Under conditions of mounting social tensions and class antagonisms, the crash is being utilised to cultivate an atmosphere of national emergency and appeal for “national unity.”

Abbott announced a national day of mourning to be held in the near future, and ordered all government flags to be flown at half-mast today. The corporate media played its expected role, giving wall-to-wall amplification of the accusations against Russia, while publishing emotive short biographies and photos of the Australians who lost their lives.

Yesterday, the Abbott government summoned Russian ambassador Vladimir Morozov for a dressing down by Foreign Minister Julie Bishop. Bishop reportedly insisted that Russia support a UN Security Council investigation into the crash, and demanded that Morozov answer whether Russian weapons could have been used to down the plane.

In a press conference following the meeting, Abbott denounced Morozov’s claim that responsibility for the crash rested with the Ukrainian regime in Kiev. Abbott warned that the events were a “test” for Russia and that its “whole standing in the world is at risk here.” Describing Morozov’s response as “deeply, deeply unsatisfactory,” Abbott declared: “We all know that there are problems in Ukraine. We also know who is very substantially to blame for those problems.”

Following a phone discussion today between Abbott and US President Barack Obama, the White House issued a statement that declared: “The two leaders discussed the importance of a prompt, full, unimpeded and transparent international investigation, and they stressed the need for immediate access by international investigators to the crash site.”

Philippa King, Australia’s representative on the UN Security Council, issued a series of demands on Russia during an overnight emergency session in New York. She declared that “it must end its provocations and any support for separatist forces. It must control its border with Ukraine and prevent the flow of weapons, equipment and fighters from Russia into Ukraine.”

Labor’s Bill Shorten repeated his call today for

Russia to be excluded from the G20 talks. “I put on record again,” he told journalists, “if the Russian Federation doesn’t co-operate and help us get to the heart of what has really happened in this senseless act of murder, the government should indeed consider not inviting the Russian President Putin to Australia.”

Whatever the immediate circumstances of the downing of MH17, one thing is certain: responsibility above all rests in Washington, Berlin and the other imperialist centres, including their backers in Canberra, which have plunged Ukraine into civil war as part of a drive to encircle and ultimately dismember Russia. The tragedy is now being exploited by the Obama administration and its allies to increase their pressure and threats against the Putin regime, further raising the risk of a catastrophic nuclear war.

The Australian political establishment’s role in supporting this reckless agenda is yet another demonstration that it functions as the one of the chief diplomatic adjuncts of the imperialist intrigues carried out by Washington in every corner of the globe.



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