

The crash of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in Ukraine

Alex Lantier
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The remarks Friday by President Barack Obama on the tragic crash of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine raised far more questions than they answered.

Obama continued the mind-numbing propaganda barrage from US officials and media, denouncing Russia and pro-Russian separatist forces in eastern Ukraine for shooting down the plane and demanding the surrender of the separatists to the Western-backed regime in Kiev. However, his remarks themselves underscored that this propaganda campaign has no factual basis whatsoever and is leading Washington into an explosive confrontation with Russia.

Obama said: “Here is what we know so far. Evidence indicates that the plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile that was launched from an area that is controlled by Russian-backed separatists inside of Ukraine. We also know that this is not the first time a plane has been shot down in eastern Ukraine. Over the last several weeks, Russian-backed separatists have shot down a Ukrainian transport plane and a Ukrainian helicopter, and they claimed responsibility for shooting down a Ukrainian fighter jet. Moreover, we know that these separatists have received a steady flow of support from Russia.”

Reread Obama’s comments carefully. You will see that nothing he said proves that pro-Russian forces fired a missile at MH17. Separatist rebels have shot down low-flying Ukrainian military aircraft with portable anti-aircraft missiles, but this does not mean they had either the intent or the capability to destroy a jumbo jet flying at 33,000 feet—an act they knew would hand Washington a massive propaganda weapon.

As for Obama’s claim that the separatists control the area from which the missile was fired, for which he presented no evidence, this means nothing given the

chaotic conditions in eastern Ukraine. In the city of Donetsk, the stronghold of the anti-Kiev separatists, forces loyal to Kiev control the airport, from which they routinely shell the city. In fact, shortly before MH17 was allegedly destroyed by a BUK missile near Donetsk, the Kiev regime reinforced its anti-aircraft batteries in the region.

Remarkably, Obama went on to admit that his administration does not know who shot down MH17 or why. He said, “I think it’s too early for us to be able to guess what intentions those who might have launched the surface-to-air missile might have had... In terms of identifying specifically what individual or group of individuals, you know, personnel ordered the strike, how it came about—those are things that I think are going to be subject to additional information that we’re going to be gathering.”

Again, reread Obama’s statement carefully. Behind all the conditional statements and verbal hedging, he is saying nothing about who launched the strike. Obama’s remarks directly contradict those of his own UN ambassador, Samantha Power, who had just stated that there was “credible evidence” that Russia was responsible for the crash, adding, “Russia can end this war. Russia must end this war.”

Obama proceeded to throw a question mark over the entire coverage of the MH17 crash: “I want to point out there will likely be misinformation as well. I think it’s very important for folks to sift through what is factually based and what is simply speculation.”

The picture of the situation that emerges from Obama’s account is remarkable. By his own admission, the United States and its allies are hurtling toward a military confrontation with Russia, under conditions where the White House does not know who is responsible for the MH17 crash and believes powerful

political forces are feeding misinformation to the media.

Having already admitted that the CIA did not bother to inform him before spying on German officials, Obama is apparently trying to figure out what his own government is doing—all the while irresponsibly denouncing Russia.

Properly considered, any of the possible explanations for the firing of a missile at MH17 raise the most serious questions about the risk of a direct clash between the Western powers and Russia.

While there is a deafening silence on this in the US media, forces loyal to Kiev may well have fired a BUK missile that took down MH17. The motive that would lie behind such an act is demonstrated by the US media campaign itself: to denounce Russia, step up the campaign for NATO intervention in Ukraine, and seek to whip into line some of Washington's European allies who are balking at imposing sweeping sanctions against Russia.

The very real possibility that pro-Kiev forces shot down the plane takes into account the close ties between CIA operatives, mercenaries of the US firm formerly known as Blackwater, European intelligence agencies, and the fascist militias that spearhead Kiev's armed forces. It raises the possibility of direct complicity of sections of the American state in the murder of MH17's passengers and crew.

Particularly significant are Russian media reports that MH17 briefly crossed the path of Russian President Vladimir Putin's flight returning from the World Cup and an international summit in Brazil, and that factions in Moscow believe the missile that destroyed MH17 may have been intended for Putin. It is impossible to verify whether such reports are correct. However, if sections of the Russian state come to believe that American and European intelligence agencies sanctioned an assassination attempt on the Russian head of state, the implications are mind-boggling.

On the other hand, if, as the US propaganda campaign claims, MH17 was destroyed by a missile fired by forces allied to or directly aided by Russia, this raises the question of what message the Russian factions involved were trying to send by demonstrating their willingness to murder nearly 300 people. It would certainly show that Moscow takes the crisis in Ukraine far more seriously than Washington realizes, and the

situation is extremely dangerous.

The US media and political establishment, in their haste to denounce Russia, appear completely uninterested in these questions. This attitude combines utter recklessness with light-mindedness. What has already been revealed by the MH17 disaster is the deep crisis of Western imperialism and the risk of global war.



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