

# What are the politics of the crash of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17?

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A US State Department press briefing Monday by spokeswoman Marie Harf on the crash of flight MH17 in eastern Ukraine made clear that the US government and media have no credible evidence to support their allegations of Russian involvement in this horrible tragedy. Repeatedly challenged to substantiate such charges by Associated Press (AP) reporter Matt Lee, Harf could not present any concrete information whatsoever.

Lee first cited the Russian army's presentation of radar data and satellite images showing the Kiev regime's warplanes and missile batteries tracking MH17 shortly before the crash. He then asked her to respond to Moscow's request that Washington publish documentation to substantiate its version of events, such as data from a US spy satellite that Moscow observed in the area at the time of the crash.

Harf's reply was simply vacuous. She said, "We know, we saw in social media afterwards, we saw videos, we saw photos of the pro-Russian separatists bragging about shooting down an aircraft that then they then...excuse me, took down once it became clear that it may have been a passenger airline."

Lee asked Harf whether Washington would release any hard evidence like the data provided by the Russian army. Harf refused to even address the issue, simply claiming that she had not bothered to watch the Russian army's presentation. "I haven't seen any of that," she said.

Lee pressed Harf on how Washington in fact knows that the missile was fired from territory held by the pro-Russian forces. Harf replied, "We do know first that Russian-backed separatists were in possession of an SA-11 [surface-to-air missile] system as early as Monday, July 14. This is from intercepts of separatist communications posted on YouTube by the Ukrainian

government."

Lee interrupted Harf to ask whether Washington could release any evidence for its claims besides social media postings. Harf's reply made clear it could not: "If there's more information that that's based on that we can share, we're happy to do so. We'll continue looking at that. But look, this is what we know as of right now. Based on open information which is basically common sense, right, we know where it was fired from, we know who has this weapon." She added, "I know it's frustrating. Believe me, we try to get as much out there as possible. And for some reason, sometimes we can't."

It is astounding that the US government would expect anyone to accept such nonsense as evidence of anything. US intelligence agencies collectively spend hundreds of billions of dollars yearly on massive surveillance operations; they apparently were monitoring the area of the crash via satellite. The only evidence Harf cited, however, was an obscure audio recording of a conversation between two unknown operatives posted to YouTube by the Ukrainian Security Service, which is controlled by the CIA.

Its contents prove nothing. Ukrainian forces also have SA-11 missile systems and could have fired them at MH17. One missile launcher, serial number 312, that media initially charged had launched a missile at MH17 proved to be part of the Ukrainian army's arsenal.

This is a *modus operandi* US imperialism has used for years: relying on unverified claims about terrifying subjects like weapons of mass destruction or plane crashes to railroad the American people into war, with terrible consequences. US Secretary of State Colin Powell's 2003 presentation at the UN, claiming that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, proved to be a pack of lies. Last year's claims that Syria had used

chemical weapons, utilized to press for a war, were exposed by journalist Seymour Hersh as a fabrication by Turkey, Al Qaeda and factions of the American state.

Significantly, President Obama and US Secretary of State John Kerry have raised questions about the current crisis with Russia, with Obama warning of “misinformation” in the media and Kerry stressing that he did not want to address the issue of Russian “culpability” for the disaster.

Nonetheless, the Western media campaign against Russia continues unabated. Writing Wednesday in the *New York Times*, Bernard-Henri Lévy rabidly denounced Putin, blaming him for the crash. Lévy wrote: “He has taken thugs, thieves, rapists, ex-cons and vandals and turned them into a paramilitary force... To this motley collection Mr. Putin, the Russian president, gave a terrifying arsenal with which the amateur soldiers were unfamiliar and with which they have been playing, like kids with fireworks.”

Such vitriolic denunciations of Putin and Russia are calls for a NATO intervention in Ukraine that directly risks escalating the civil war provoked by the NATO-backed, fascist-led putsch last February into a global nuclear war. In a filthy article in the *New York Times*, columnist Roger Cohen argued for ignoring the results of the investigation of the MH17 crash and instead invading Ukraine and risking world war.

In his piece entitled “The Suns of August,” he wrote: “A century on from World War I, nobody wants the guns of August. Yet it must be asked if waiting years for the evasive conclusions of an official investigation into the fate of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 is better than acting now on what we already know... Russia would veto any United Nations Security Council Resolution authorizing force for a limited mission to recover the bodies and the evidence. But Ukraine, on whose territory the debris and dead lie, would support it. The American, British, Dutch and Australian governments should set an ultimatum backed by the credible threat of force demanding unfettered access to the [crash] site.”

The most urgent warnings to the international working class are necessary. Columnists like Cohen and the intelligence agencies for which they speak threaten to unleash a war whose toll would be at least in the hundreds of millions. In a speech this week,

Russian President Vladimir Putin stated that he would defend Russia’s territorial integrity and had the weapons to do so. The Russian military arsenal, like the American, includes enough nuclear weapons to destroy the planet several times over.

While the factual evidence has yet to emerge to allow investigators to determine what caused the crash, political evidence accumulates each day that the Western media, speaking for sections of the American and European ruling classes, is intent on provoking a war. What do people willing to risk such a war care for the lives of 298 people on board Malaysian Airlines flight MH17?



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