

Dutch investigation into MH17 shoot-down fails to substantiate accusations against Russia

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14 October 2015

The Dutch Safety Board (DSB) published the final report Tuesday of its investigation into the downing of flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine last year, concluding that the plane was shot down by a warhead launched from a Buk surface-to-air missile system.

The Malaysian passenger jet was downed while flying over areas where fighting was taking place between the US-backed Kiev government and Russian-backed separatist groups, resulting in the deaths of all 298 people on board.

The DSB report concludes that a warhead mounted on a Buk missile exploded outside the cockpit, splitting the nose of the plane from the fuselage. The damage to the plane resulted in the near instant death of everyone on board, resulting from exposure to extreme temperatures and pressure levels, and sent the plane hurtling to the ground.

The report dismisses “other scenarios” that have been put forward to explain the downing of the plane, in particular that it was destroyed by fighter jets that Russian officials claim were patrolling in the area of the commercial jetliner at the time it crashed.

“The high-energy object damage was not caused by an air-to-air gun or cannon because the number of the perforations was not consistent with gunfire, and because air-to-air gun/cannon fire does not produce fragments with the distinctive forms that were found in the wreckage and in the bodies of the crew members,” the report states.

Despite the DSB’s more than yearlong effort to gather and analyze evidence, including several visits to the crash site and a partial reconstruction of the destroyed aircraft, the final report does not provide any evidence demonstrating who bears responsibility for the deadly attack.

No evidence has yet emerged to justify the tidal wave

of unsubstantiated war propaganda leveled against the Russian government in the immediate aftermath of the shoot-down. The highly definite terms in which the Western powers cast their accusations against Putin have been exposed as politically motivated and highly dubious.

As soon as news of the crash broke, the incident was seized upon the US government, NATO, various European governments, and the media to conduct a politically motivated campaign to press for economic sanctions against Russia based on unsubstantiated claims that Moscow was directly or indirectly responsible.

The report’s only major political content is focused on criticisms directed at the US-backed Ukrainian government, not at Russia, for failing to close the airspace over eastern Ukraine, an active conflict zone, to civilian air traffic.

The publication of the DSB report was generally treated as a secondary story by most major US news outlets, and was not for the most part the subject of the usual hysterical anti-Russian propaganda treatment by cable news outlets.

In its comments, the Obama administration has maintained only that the missile was fired from separatist-controlled territory, and that the report vindicates previous positions taken by administration officials including Secretary of State John Kerry.

While the statements of Obama administration officials were tailored to imply that the US position has been validated by the DSB investigation, their remarks represent a significant step back from the actual claims made by Kerry in late July, when the secretary of state explicitly stated that the Russian separatists and the Russian government were behind the attacks.

Sections of the American media have sought to spin

the DSB report as implying that Russian responsibility for the attack had been established. In particular, the fact that the Buk system is a Russian made-model was seized on to portray the report as proving Moscow's involvement, ignoring the fact that the Ukrainian government also possesses the Russian-made missile systems.

The *New York Times* led the field with an article titled, "Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 Most Likely Hit by Russian-Made Missile, Inquiry Says," while *US News & World Report* ran a headline which claimed that the "Dutch report refutes Russia."

According to the *Times*, the report's findings "appear consistent with a theory widely promoted by the authorities in the United States and Ukraine: that the plane, a Boeing 777, was shot down by Russian-backed separatists armed with an SA-11, or Buk, surface-to-air missile launcher."

The accounting in the *Times* is geared to convey an entirely fraudulent claim: that the DSB report bolsters accusations of Russian responsibility for the shoot-down, something that it explicitly does not do.



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