

Russia implicates pro-NATO Ukrainian regime in MH17 shoot-down

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On Monday, the Russian Ministry of Defence revealed new details in the shoot-down near Donetsk in eastern Ukraine of a Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 (MH17) flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur on July 17, 2014. The crash killed all 298 passengers and crew on board. The Russian Defence Ministry used serial number data to show that the missile that hit the jetliner was produced in 1986, before the Stalinist dissolution of the Soviet Union. It was held by the Ukrainian army.

Just after the crash, Washington and NATO, backed by the Western media, accused Moscow and pro-Russian separatist forces in eastern Ukraine of shooting down MH17. US ambassador to the UN Samantha Power blamed Moscow for downing the flight, stating that there was “credible evidence” that Russia was responsible for the crash. They did not, however, give any hard evidence implicating Moscow.

NATO then stoked an explosive war hysteria targeting Russia and built up its military forces across eastern Europe. It was less than six months after the US-orchestrated, fascist-led coup in February 2014 that toppled pro-Russian Ukrainian President Viktor Yanukovich in Kiev, and installed the far right in power. US and European media denounced Russian President Vladimir Putin as being personally responsible for the shoot-down, with Germany’s *Der Spiegel* declaring that the time for diplomacy with Russia was over: “The wreckage of MH17 is the wreckage of diplomacy.”

Using data provided by the Ukrainian regime, which obtained veto power over the investigation, the Europol-affiliated Joint Investigation Team (JIT) blamed the crash on Moscow. In May, it concluded that the MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine by a Russian-made Buk missile, supplied by Russia’s 53rd anti-aircraft

brigade in Kursk. Wilbert Paulissen, a Dutch JIT investigator, said: “All the vehicles transporting missiles were part of the Russian armed forces.”

Now, however, using the serial numbers provided by the JIT, Moscow has given damning evidence that this missile was in fact under the Kiev regime’s control as it shot down MH17. This refutes NATO charges that Moscow shot down the jet—charges that NATO used to justify a massive military build-up in eastern Europe, on the borders of Russia.

According to the JIT, two serial numbers were found on fragments of the missile, one on the nose, and the other on the craft itself. The JIT claimed that MH17 was shot down by a 9M38-series missile from a Buk missile launcher and that the missile was manufactured in 1986; it also provided the serial number 9032 for the missile’s rocket motor.

Russian officials claimed to have linked these identification numbers to a missile bearing serial number 8868720. It said that the missile was delivered to Ukraine and never sent back to Russia. In a media briefing, Nikolai Parshin, the head of the Main Missile and Artillery Directorate, said: “So the missile...on December 29, 1986, was sent by rail to the military unit 20152. It is well known that the missile was received by the military unit.”

The unit is stationed on Ukraine’s western borders, according to Parshin—that is, in territory securely held by the NATO-backed regime: “Separately, I will mention the military unit 20152, where the missile with the number 886847349 was put, its real name is 221 anti-aircraft missile brigade. ... By the decree of the president of Ukraine this unit was renamed into 223 anti-aircraft missile regiment. Currently, this unit is located in the city of Stryi of the Lviv region, they still have the Buk systems.”

The Russian Ministry of Defence said that the documentation for the Buk missile that brought down MH17 is still stored at the Dolgoprudny plant where it was built, and announced that it had sent declassified documents on the missile to the JIT. Parshin explained, “This is a set of technical documentation that is filled at the manufacturing plant for each manufactured product and stored there, regardless of whether it is in Russia or abroad. Among the documents presented to you is a passport for the nozzle cluster 9D13105000 No. 8-30-113.”

Moscow stated that the anti-aircraft missile regiment that received the Buk missile that shot down MH17 was involved in what Kiev called an “anti-terrorist operation,” against Russian-backed rebels of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Lugansk People’s Republics. Parshin added, “It is noteworthy that units of the 223 regiment, since 2014, have repeatedly been involved in the so-called anti-terror operation in Donetsk and Lugansk regions.”

This would have placed the battery in the region of Ukraine where MH17 was shot down. It bolsters Moscow’s previous charges that Ukrainian forces brought down the jetliner.

In response to the Russian revelation, the JIT said it would “meticulously study” its information as soon as it was made available. It also claimed it had always carefully analysed information provided by Russia, and found that information “previously presented to the public and provided to the JIT was factually inaccurate on several points.” However, JIT did not try to rebut the Russian evidence or provide evidence to prove its supposed inaccuracy.

Ukraine’s Defence Minister Stepan Poltorak dismissed Russia’s claims as “another fake story.”

These events cast a cold light on Russia’s post-Soviet capitalist oligarchy’s accommodation to Western imperialism. Unwilling and incapable of appealing to anti-war sentiment in the US and European working class, it oscillates between preparing for nuclear war and trying to work out a deal with what it calls its “Western partners,” all the while giving evidence implicating these “partners” in criminal provocations against Russia.

Nevertheless, a striking difference exists between Moscow’s charges and the hysterical campaign mounted by the NATO powers four years ago to justify

a reckless military build-up on the borders of Russia. While Moscow presents evidence to back its claims, NATO issues blanket accusations based only on the say-so of US and European intelligence agencies.

Ever since a US-led coalition invaded Iraq in 2003, claiming that they were invading in order to destroy Iraqi weapons of mass destruction that did not in fact exist, Washington and its European allies have been infamous for launching wars and military campaigns based on lies.

Now, it appears the NATO escalation in eastern Europe was similarly based on lies. Claims that only Russia has Buk missiles, and that identifying the missile that brought down MH17 as a Buk in and of itself proved Russian responsibility for the crash, were false. Yet they were used to justify a military build-up that left Europe teetering on the brink of “total war” with nuclear-armed Russia, as French President François Hollande remarked in 2015.

The JIT neither released data from MH17’s black box—taken from Malaysian authorities after the crash and sent to Britain—nor radar data on eastern Ukraine provided by Moscow. Nor did it publish US radar and satellite data on the area. Instead, it relied on wiretaps, photos and brief videos posted by unidentified users to Ukrainian social media and apparently collected by Ukrainian intelligence.

The Russian Ministry of Defence also charged that a video showing Russia’s Buk system in Ukraine is a doctored animation based on one photo. “The images of a tractor, a trailer, and a Buk were built into the image of the corresponding section of the motor road during the production of this video. ... Many signs of falsification of the video recording were also revealed in an episode showing the movement of the Buk in Lugansk,” it reported.

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