The Moscow Times
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Facebook Apologizes for Deleting Russian Journalist's MH17 Post

By Anna Dolgov

May 08, 2015



Facebook has apologized for briefly deleting a post by a prominent Russian journalist who ridiculed the Kremlin's changing narrative about the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine.

Journalist Sergei Parkhomenko said Facebook administrators also temporarily blocked him from accessing his account after the post disappeared from his page.

Facebook called deleting the post a "mistake" and apologized, according to a statement quoted by Russian and U.S. media.

In the post — which has since been restored — Pakhomenko offered a caustic commentary on Russia's shifting claims about the downing of the Malaysian airliner last summer as the release date for the results of a Dutch-led international investigation grows nearer.

"As had been predicted many times, the Kremlin decided to retreat to the next line of its

defenses in the case of the downed Malaysian Boeing MH17," Parkhomenko wrote.

International investigators have focused on a Russian-made surface-to-air missile, such as the Buk, as the likely cause of the disaster that killed all 298 people aboard. Ukraine has accused Moscow-backed separatist insurgents of firing the missile.

Moscow had initially denied any Buk involvement, arguing that MH17 was shot down by an air-to-air missile fired by a Ukrainian military plane.

But a report attributed to Russian military engineers and published by an independent Russian newspaper this week said that the airliner was indeed hit by a Buk missile — although it was supposedly fired by Ukrainian government forces.

Ukraine's counterintelligence chief Vitaly Nayda responded with his own report, arguing that the military engineer's claim was based on doctored images.

Still, the Russian report presented a substantial departure from Moscow's previous claims, when military officials and state-run media presented what they described as detailed evidence of a Ukrainian plane shooting down the Malaysian airliner.

Parkhomenko offered a parody of Russian claims in his post: "Yes, a Buk. Of course. What else. We never denied it. ... So what it that was a Buk? Now we will fight to our death [to insist] that it wasn't our Buk."

And then, "the next thing we hear will be: "Yes, it was our Buk, but its levers were manned by damned Ukrainians,'" he quipped. "Then it will turn out that the man behind the controls was wearing Russian military shoulder straps, but [Moscow will say] 'he has been perfidiously recruited by foreign secret services to commit that horrible crime.'"

The Dutch-led investigators are to present their findings in October.

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