

# Russia Must Help MH17 Investigation

By [Nikolai Eppe](#)

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Dutch Safety Board chairman Tjibbe Joustra on Tuesday presented the final conclusions of the report devoted to the downing of Flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine last year. The findings were surprisingly neutral, devoid of any sensational statements or references to perpetrators. Of course, that team was not charged with assigning blame either.

Their mandate was to determine the technical reasons for the crash, why civilian flights over the war zone were not rerouted, who is responsible for that oversight and whether those on board realized what was happening before their deaths.

The authors of the report answered those questions. They found that the plane was shot down by a 9N314M warhead installed on a 9M38-series missile and fired from a Buk surface-to-air missile system. Those civilian flights were not rerouted because the Ukrainian authorities never imagined that aircraft flying above the range of standard air defense systems were in any danger. However, Kiev is responsible for the fact that flights continued. The investigation also found that death came instantaneously and painlessly to all on board.

These findings are extremely restrained, but at least on these questions, the international

community can put all doubts to rest. The report specifically states that investigators considered all other versions of events and ruled them out. It is noteworthy that, although the report estimates a larger territory from which the missile could have been launched than either the Russian or Ukrainian sides had suggested, that area does not include the town of Zaroshchenskoye that the firm of Almaz-Antey contends was the point of origin. The international investigative group charged with identifying those responsible for the downing will announce its findings early next year.

It is already clear that the group has enough information to go on — everything from eyewitness testimony from those who saw the Buk missile system both prior to and after the launch, as well as video footage and photographs documenting the path the Buk followed through the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic. Now both sides are preparing to present new evidence, including satellite images, voice transcripts of telephone calls and other documents.

Also on Tuesday, Almaz-Antey, the manufacturer of the Buk systems, presented the results of experiments it conducted that confirm the conclusions the company reached back in June. According to that version of events, if Flight MH17 was shot down by a Buk, then it was with a missile that the Russian Air Force no longer uses, and the missile was launched not from Snizhne, which is controlled by the separatists, but from Zaroshchenskoye, which is controlled by the Ukrainian military.

Because international public opinion runs against Russia, the ambiguity of the investigation results will not be interpreted in Moscow's favor. And that is why Russia should be more interested than anyone in presenting convincing evidence of its innocence.

According to aviation expert and former Sukhoi design engineer Vadim Lukashevich, if Russia had wanted to make that argument, it should have presented data from its missile defense systems and airspace control system mounted on the A-50 aircraft — much like the U.S. AWACS system — showing all activity in the area in question. However, Moscow has not done that. Neither did Russia present any eyewitnesses, other than a few with highly questionable motives and far-fetched stories.

Nikolai Epple is a columnist at Vedomosti. This comment originally appeared in Vedomosti.

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