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Poland's Defense Minister in 'No Doubt' Russia Responsible for 2010 Polish Plane Crash

By The Moscow Times

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Antoni Macierewicz,▣Poland's defense minister, has promised to present a new government▣report that he says "leaves no doubts" Russia is to blame▣for the 2010 plane crash that killed Polish president Lech Kaczyński.

"The▣actions of the Russian navigators and their Moscow decision makers▣had the aim to lead to the catastrophe of the Polish plane with▣president Lech Kaczyński and the whole delegation on-board," Macierewicz told Polish newspaper Rzeczpospolita.

The government plane▣crashed near Russia's Smolensk airport in April 2010 whilst carrying▣the first official delegation to commemorate the 1940 Katyn massacre.▣The plane carried the Polish president, his wife, the country's▣central bank chief, several MPs, its most senior military and▣cultural figures.

Two independent investigations ruled that the crash was the result of a pilot error. The transcripts recovered from the plane's black box were made public and showed that the pilots of the Tupolev plane were under pressure by senior officials to land in poor visibility.

But Poland's ruling party Law and Justice (PiS), led by the late president's identical twin brother Jarosław Kaczyński, has long alleged that Moscow and former Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk hold some blame for the disaster. Macierewicz is the party figure most associated with trying to uncover the "truth" about what happened in Smolensk. Shortly after the crash, he put forward his theory of an explosion on board.

When PiS came to power late last year, it promised to re-open the probe into the crash. The new government commission started working in March. Today, Macierewicz promised to present a new report — "probably within the next month" — that he says will prove the Russians caused the crash.

"The choice is not if the Polish pilots were responsible for the Smolensk tragedy or if it was an assassination. The question is if the destruction of the presidential plane happened in the air because the plane was consciously allowed to fly with a technical fault, or if we were dealing with intentional actions with the aim of destroying the plane in the air," Macierewicz said.

The crash is the worst national tragedy in modern Poland and has left deep scars on Polish politics and society.

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