

# Bellingcat Links Russian General to Downing of Flight MH17

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**Vladimir Putin (R) greets Regional Troops Commander-in-Chief Colonel-General Nikolai Tkachev (L) during a meeting with top Russian officers on the occasion of their promotion or appointment to new posts ( Mikhail Klimentyev / TASS)**

Russian Colonel General Nikolai Tkachev has been identified as a key figure in the downing of MH17 in a joint [report](#) released Friday by Bellingcat and The Insider.

Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine in July 2014 at the height of the conflict between Kiev and pro-Russian separatists. In 2015, the Dutch Safety Board found that the plane was hit by a Russian-made Buk missile, adding to suspicions that Russian-backed separatists were responsible for the airliner's downing.

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In September 2016, the Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team (JIT) [published](#) a call for

information about a key suspect in the incident — Nikolai Fedorovich, also known as “Delfin.”

“The investigation has identified, to a high degree of certainty, Delfin as Colonel General Nikolai Fedorovich Tkachev, currently serving as the Chief Inspector of the Central Military District of the Russian Federation,” the joint report said Friday. Tkachev is the most senior Russian officer linked to the downing of MH17 to date.

Former separatist commander Igor Girkin told The Insider that he had met Delfin. He confirmed the meeting in [comments](#) to the RBC business portal Friday.

"I honestly do not know his name," Girkin told RBC. "But I know the callsign: Delfin. I was sure that he was a retired general."

The Kremlin has denied involvement in eastern Ukraine and the downing of the airliner, which claimed the lives of all 298 people onboard.

Bellingcat's report with The Insider used open source data and forensic voice analysis to identify Tkachev.

In an interview with The Insider, Tkachev denied having been in Ukraine in 2014, let alone having traveled outside of Yekaterinburg since 2012.

On Friday, JIT [said](#) it had “taken note” of the joint report but could not yet offer additional comments.

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