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Russia Downplays Dutch-Led Investigation Into the Downing of MH17

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Francois Lenoir / Reuters

A Dutch-led investigation into the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over eastern Ukraine in 2014 said Thursday that the missile that took down the jet had come from Russia's 53rd Anti-Aircraft Brigade.

Russian state media and state officials downplayed the news on Thursday. The state-run TASS news agency featured a headline saying that that international investigators "are still unable" to determine who downed the plane, while an article at the state-run Vesti.ru news website failed to mention the investigation's claim linking the missile that hit the plane to Russia's armed forces.

Throughout the investigation, Russia has denied any connection to the attack that killed 298 people.

Here are the first Russian reactions to the news:

— Defense Ministry

“From the first hours after the tragedy, Russia’s Defense Ministry has consistently refuted the Ukrainian insinuations that allege Russian armed forces were complicit in the catastrophe in Ukraine’s airspace and have passed the relevant evidence to the Dutch investigative group.”

“Not a single anti-aircraft missile system belonging to the Russian Armed Forces has ever crossed the Russian-Ukrainian border.”

— Russian envoy to the European Union Vladimir Chizhov

“This is an old story leaked into the media field way back then, in 2014.”

— Yury Shvytkin, deputy head of the State Duma Defense Committee

[Misinterpreting the Dutch prosecutors’ use of the word “fingerprint” to identify the missile launcher.]

“Foolishness. It’s clearly fake.”

“How can fingerprints belong to a brigade? They can belong to a specific serviceman. How can they identify the fingerprints of an active serviceman?”

— Russian state-run Vesti.ru news website, quoting DNR rebel commander Eduard Basurin

“We don’t have any Russian arms, including the Buk missile system, nor did we ever have them.”

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