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Four Years On, What Do Russians Think About the Downing of MH17?

By Alina Shubina

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Four years ago, Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17 was shot down over eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 passengers onboard, most of whom were Dutch.

The Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team has concluded that the plane was brought down by a Russian-made Buk missile system provided by a Russian military unit. Meanwhile, the Kremlin and state media have steadfastly denied any involvement and cast doubt on the international investigation.

Four years after the downing, The Moscow Times asked Russians outside the Dutch Embassy in central Moscow what they thought about the crash and the allegations of Russian involvement.

I think Russia has nothing to do with it. One hundred percent — I'd bet my life on it. Because we don't need it. What's the point? For Russia to knock down a civilian plane, that's beyond the scope of possibility. There's no logic to it whatsoever.

Sergei Tiushevsky, 60, manager

We have no real information. We hear different opinions, but we there's no information source which is accurate. Maybe we would trust the international community if it had a better attitude toward Russia.

Larisa Gerasimova, 58, doctor

I don’t know. These kinds of political things, these big games — I don’t know, I've honestly never looked into it. I only know that a tragedy took place four years ago on Dutch territory, and I’m just very sorry for the people.

Dmitry Maltsev, 28, actor

It’s a very delicate question, but I don't think Russia is involved. If Russia is guilty, then what was the purpose of aiming that missile at that plane? And moreover, figuring out whether the Buk came from Russia or Ukraine is also problematic, because it is a Soviet weapon. Figuring out whose side it came from — well, that’s useless.

Olga Samsonova, 47, HR specialist

From what I understand, the plane was hit with a Russian Buk. But Russia claims that its use was discontinued many years ago and then somehow ended up in Ukraine. I haven’t formed an opinion because I think there’s a lot of misinformation. I think after the Skripal case everyone has a very unnuanced opinion and is very emotional.

Maria Popova, 37, lawyer

I don’t know for sure. The impression I’m getting is that the countries that disagree with our foreign policy are just sabotaging the situation for Russia. I have some ideas I wouldn’t really voice about who launched the missile, but it was definitely not us.

Anna Pochukanets, 38, financier

According to our news coverage we weren’t involved, according to the rest of the world, it was us. So it’s very difficult to say. I think until there’s clear proof, you can’t condemn anyone. Some people say it was Ukraine but they used our weapons, so God knows. And then some people say nothing happened in the first place.

Yulia Rusak, 33, tour guide

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