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Russia Accuses the Netherlands of 'Exploiting' MH17 Tragedy

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Iren Moroz / Pacific / Barcroft

The Netherlands is "exploiting" the grief of victims' families over the downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight MH17, Russia's Foreign Ministry said on the fifth anniversary of the tragedy on Wednesday.

Russia has denied any role in the July 17, 2014, downing of MH17 by a missile over territory in eastern Ukraine held by pro-Russian separatists. Last month, a Dutch-led international investigative team named three Russians and one Ukrainian as suspects in the murder of the 298 people on board.

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"The Dutch authorities, as sad as this sounds, are increasingly exploiting the feelings and grief of the Flight MH17 victims' relatives," Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement marking the anniversary.

The Foreign Ministry accused Amsterdam of using the victims' associations as a "battering ram to push through global public opinion talking points about Russia's involvement."

"Unfortunately, this tragedy has become a tool in a dirty political game," it said.

The victims' families on Tuesday called on the Russian government to take responsibility for the downing of MH17 and accused it of "disingenuous denials, lies and deceit."

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Later on Wednesday, the Kremlin's spokesman reiterated Moscow's position that it does not recognize the legitimacy of the investigative team that seeks to try the four identified suspects.

The investigation's leader, meanwhile, told Dutch media that new witnesses have come forward and called the new development "promising."

Moscow has consistently denied claims that it was involved in the downing of MH17.

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