

Dutch Court Hears Call For Missile Said to Have Downed MH17

By [AFP](#)

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Wrecked fuselage from the MH17 jet shot down over rebel-held Eastern Ukraine in 2014. **Vitaly Chugin / TASS**

A Dutch court heard Wednesday how two defendants discussed the procurement of a surface-to-air missile which prosecutors say was eventually used to shoot down Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in 2014.

Judges this week began hearing evidence in the trial of four people — three Russians and a Ukrainian — charged in connection with an attack on the airliner over war-torn eastern Ukraine which crashed, killing all 298 people on board.

Russian nationals Oleg Pulatov, Igor Girkin and Sergei Dubinsky, and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko were charged with murder after the Boeing 777 was blown from the sky on a routine flight between Amsterdam and Kuala Lumpur.

He needed "long-range artillery," after suffering heavy losses in the fighting, Pulatov is heard saying in a telephone conversation played during Wednesday's hearing.

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During the same call dated July 17, the day the jet was shot down, Dubinsky is heard telling Pulatov "the BUK will be brought to him" by Kharchenko and it should "be placed near Pervomayski" in the rebel-held eastern Ukraine.

Judges also considered evidence showing the Russian-made BUK missile was brought to the Donetsk area with a truck and trailer.

The trial of the four men formally started in March 2020 but has until now dealt with legal arguments, mainly about the admissibility of evidence in the crash. This week it entered a key phase that involves examining the evidence.

All four are absent from the hearings and only Pulatov has legal representation.

Judges on Monday said the court will this week look at evidence concerning three key questions: whether the Boeing 777 was shot down by a Russian-made missile; the location the missile was fired from, and the role of the four suspects in the crash.

An international investigation concluded that a BUK missile that had originally come from the Russian army's 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade based in the city of Kursk was responsible.

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The argument that the plane was downed by a BUK surface-to-air missile operated by pro-Russian separatists in eastern Ukraine was the "main scenario", Judge Hendrik Steenhuis said as proceedings opened this week.

Prosecutors and the defence will have the chance to present their cases during hearings that are to last until July 9.

Relatives of the victims will be able to address the court in September.

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