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‘External Impact’ Caused Russian Military Plane Crash – TASS

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Debris at the crash site of the Russian Il-76 military transport plane. **Russian Investigative Committee / TASS**

Information recovered from the “black boxes” of the Russian Il-76 military transport plane that crashed near the border with Ukraine last week indicates the aircraft was shot down, the state-run news agency TASS reported Tuesday, citing an anonymous security agency source.

“The data from the black boxes exclude all [other] possible versions of the Il-76 crash and confirm that the plane was subjected to external impact,” the source was quoted as saying.

“In other words, it was shot down in the air. It's obvious,” the source added.

Moscow accuses Kyiv of shooting down the Ilyushin Il-76 plane on Wednesday in western Russia’s Belgorod region near the border with Ukraine.

Related article: Putin Says ‘Obvious’ Ukraine Behind Army Plane Crash

Russian officials claim that 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war who were being transported for a scheduled exchange that day were killed in the air disaster. Nine other Russian nationals, including crew members, were said to have died in the crash.

President Vladimir Putin said Friday it was "obvious" Ukraine had shot down the aircraft.

Ukraine has not confirmed or denied its involvement in the crash.

But on Saturday, Ukraine's spy chief Kyrylo Budanov pressed Russia to provide evidence that the Il-76 had been carrying the Ukrainian prisoners of war.

"They did not show fields covered with corpses and remains," Budanov, who heads Ukraine's GUR military intelligence, said in an interview with Ukrainian state television.

"If it happened as Russia claims, why does Russia... continue to hide the bodies?" he asked.

Russian state media previously reported that the Il-76 transport plane's flight data and voice recorders were given to a Defense Ministry lab for decoding late last week.

TASS' security agency source was quoted as saying Tuesday that "the work is nearing completion."

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