

Continuing Media Silence on the Fate of Flight MH17

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With a handful of exceptions, a shroud of silence has been drawn by the international media regarding the fate of Malaysian Airlines MH17, which crashed over Ukraine nearly six weeks ago.

Immediately after the plane crash on July 17, leading US officials, with Secretary of State John Kerry at the fore along with sections of the US and European media, alleged, without a shred of evidence, that the passenger jet had been shot down by a Russian missile fired by pro-Russian separatists operating in eastern Ukraine. The completely unfounded allegations were then used to create a frenzied political climate to justify the imposition of wide-ranging sanctions by the US and the European Union against Russia.

Since the crash there has been deliberate stalling on the part of Western authorities in releasing relevant information. At the start of this month Dutch investigators leading the inquiries announced they would release a preliminary report “in a few weeks.” Now, with only days before the end of the month, no such report has been issued. This is despite the fact that the Dutch co-ordinator for the struggle against terrorism admitted in parliament that the Dutch authorities already have extensive data from the black boxes and other sources in their possession.

One article which has raised questions regarding the silence surrounding the crash appeared recently in the German magazine *Der Spiegel*.

The magazine has played a particularly vile role in the US-led propaganda campaign to blame Russia for the crash. On the cover of its July 28 edition *Der Spiegel* featured photos of MH17 victims with the prominent red lettered text “Stop Putin Now!”. In its latest edition, the magazine again raises the banner of German militarism in a lead article deploring the state of the German army and arguing for a massive increase in military spending.

However, in one article on the crash, headlined “The strange silence of the investigators”, the magazine attempts to backtrack somewhat and at least intimate there are good reasons to doubt the official line put out by Washington and Brussels. The article refers to a letter sent to Barack Obama at the end of July by a group of former US intelligence officers. In their letter the group, known as VIPS, accused Secretary of State Kerry of attempting to use the crash to blacken Russia, recalling other blatant provocations by the Obama administration, such as the claim that Syria was responsible for chemical weapon attacks. The Obama administration has never responded to the allegations made in the VIPS letter.

The *Spiegel* article then goes on to quote reports in the Malaysian newspaper *New Straits Times*, which charge Ukraine with responsibility for the crash, citing one journalist who writes: “It is farcical that the country known for overseeing the world’s most sophisticated and far-reaching surveillance capabilities has sunk to citing grainy YouTube videos to justify its policy decisions.”

Noting that Dutch authorities already have considerable information about the details of the crash which they have undoubtedly shared with their German counterparts, the *Spiegel* article warns that it is unlikely that the black box recordings will ever be released in full. The Dutch investigation team recently announced that there were alleged legal grounds for withholding evidence from the boxes.

The failure of the media to raise the issue of the fate of MH17 prompted Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov to query on Monday why the plane’s black box recordings had not been released publicly. It appears, Lavrov said, that apart from Russia, “everyone else has lost interest in the investigation.”

Lavrov also asked why Ukraine had not yet provided recordings of conversations between air traffic controllers in the nearby airport of Dnepropetrovsk. Kiev has up until now persistently refused to publish the recordings of the conversations between the MH17 pilot and Ukrainian air traffic controllers.

Lavrov noted that Russia had contacted the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the United Nations aviation agency, and offered to provide its own information on the crash, but noted that “so far there is nothing transparent to be seen there either.”

Lavrov concluded: “We must not allow the investigation of the MH17 crash to be manipulated into oblivion as already happened to investigations of many Ukrainian tragedies, including the sniper assault against civilians in Kiev in February, massacres in Odessa and Mariupol in May, and others.”

Bearing in mind the leading role played by the US in utilizing the crash of MH17 to create the conditions for a confrontation with Russia, there can be no doubt that the administration in Washington and US intelligence services are in close contact with the Dutch authorities and are complicit in the efforts to bury the truth about what really took place on July 17.

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