

The Downed Malaysian MH17 Flight in Eastern Ukraine: Investigation Marred by Omissions and Distortions

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In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

Dutch Foreign Minister Albert Koenders and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov discussed international problems, including the crisis in Ukraine and the prosecution of suspects for their alleged involvement in the fatal downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MAS MH17 in eastern Ukraine on July 17 2014. A team of international investigators concluded a meeting to discuss the status of the investigation. The stonewalling of independent media by all of the involved parties continues.


Koenders and Lavrov met in the Russian capital Moscow on June 5, where they discussed efforts to prosecute suspects in the downing of the Malaysian Boeing 777-200. The tragic air-crash caused the death of all 298 passengers and crew on board the plane and ignited an international diplomatic row over several aspects of the crash, the civil war in Ukraine and international involvement in the civil war that, ultimately, may be the root cause for the crash.

Both Koenders and Lavrov addressed the press on Friday, stating that they also had discussed sanctions against Russian citizens. Commenting on the discussions between the two foreign ministers, Koenders said:

“They were not easy discussions because there are many areas where we don’t agree. ... But they were discussions that needed to happen.”

The investigation is led by the Dutch Safety Board (DSB). The decision to have the [DSB](#) lead the investigation was, reportedly, based on the fact that about two-thirds of the 298 deceased were Dutch citizens and because the government in Ukraine is itself a belligerent party to the civil war.

The meeting between Koenders and Lavrov came as the team of international air-crash investigators were to meet at the Gilze Rijen Air Force Base in the Netherlands. On June 7, the DSB published a statement about the meeting, saying:

 “This afternoon, the team of international aviation investigators who investigate the cause of the crash of flight MH17 concluded an investigation meeting at Gilze Rijen air force base. During the team’s first meeting (at the end of February) the members shared the findings of the investigation to date. The second meeting focused on the progress of the investigation as a whole and on the preliminary results of the forensic investigation. The participants also received further details on the work being carried out to reconstruct the

aircraft. The meeting is part of the procedure for international aviation investigations laid down by the ICAO Convention. During the meeting, good progress has been made. ...”

The investigators represent the countries involved in the MH17 investigation headed by the Dutch Safety Board: Ukraine, Malaysia, Australia, the United States, the United Kingdom and the Russian Federation.

The investigators reportedly expressed their commitment to help identifying the perpetrators who caused the downing of the Malaysian airliner and the tragic death on the 298 people on board.

In September 2014 the [DSB issued a preliminary report](#), concluding that high-velocity projectiles had impacted the airliner from the outside of the hull.

It is widely assumed that the plane has been brought down by a surface to air missile, but radar data released by the Russian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense also suggest the presence of what is believed to have been a Su-25 military jet close to the airliner. (See video released by the Russian MoD).

The government in Kiev and especially the governments of the USA and the UK are blaming what they describe as “*pro-Russian rebels*” for the tragedy. The government of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People’s Republic (DPR) and Moscow, for their part, stress that military forces in the DPR neither have Buk-M1 SAM missile systems which are believed to have been involved, nor an air force.

Following his meeting with Lavrov in Moscow, Koenders said that the Russian Foreign Minister expressed his support for an existing UN Security Council Resolution which commits the international community to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Dutch Safety Board, for its part, also reiterated its commitment to prosecute those responsible while stressing that the case is unprecedented and that it will be legally and politically challenging to put foreign suspects on trial.

Investigation marred by Omissions, Distortions and Lack of Transparency.



Source: screenshot images from
FlightAware.com

So far, the investigation has been marred by omissions and distortions and a lack of transparency. The flight route of [MAS MH17 deviated significantly from a more southerly route used in the days up to July 17, 2014, when the flight crew was assigned a route](#) that would have the airliner fly directly over a known combat area and at a flight level below the one that had been requested by the air crew.

So far, no answers about who exactly designated the more northerly flight route and *why* have been forthcoming. nsnbc international contacted the Ukrainian Transportation Ministry, the Ministry of the Interior and the Defense Ministry without receiving as much as a reply. Phone calls were re-directed to end up with unanswered phones. Promises that

ministries would call back were not kept.

nsnbc international contacted the Dutch Safety Board, requesting a certified Comma Separated Variable file from the plane's flight data recorder for analysis by independent specialists on behalf of the independent newspaper. The request was denied.

The question whether the DSB could be considered as impartial since the Netherlands is a NATO member State was considered "*inappropriate*" and further inquiries were being stonewalled by the DSB.



The [question pertaining the DSB's lead role and the Netherlands's NATO membership was based on a declassified U.S. American document](#) dated March 13, 1962.

The document is commonly known as the "[Northwoods Memorandum](#)" in which the US Joint Chiefs of Staff suggested bringing down an airliner to create a pretext for an invasion of Cuba. ([Complete copy of the declassified document - PDF](#)) . The document was declassified and released as part of the Kennedy Assassination Records Review Board's investigation.

So far, it was impossible for nsnbc international to acquire certified audio copies of conversations between Ukrainian Air Traffic Controllers and the flight crew on board the Boeing 777-200 from Ukrainian authorities or from the Dutch Safety Board.

In its preliminary report the DSB released a "*transcript*" of the communication, claiming it to be correct and truthful. The "*transcript*" however, does not allow independent media to analyze the data, to make inquiries into whether the data have been tempered with, or even if the voices match with those of the flight crew.

The international flying public is presumably expected to "*believe*" the DSB and other authorities rather than independent media and verifiable, testable data.

In fairness, an inquiry at the Russian Foreign Ministry and a request to receive certified copies and CSV files of the radar data that were released by the Russian Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense remained unanswered too.



The position of nsnbc international, as independent newspaper, is that the "*unprecedented incident*" requires "*unprecedented transparency*".

The main reasons for this unprecedented transparency are; the geopolitical implications; concerns for the safety of the global flying public; and not least, respect for the 298 on board the airliner who perished and for the bereft families and loved ones.

Earlier this month [the CEO of the Russian arms manufacturer and producer of the Buk-M1 missile system announced that the company is ready to stage a full-scale experiment under international supervision](#) to proof that Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 was downed by a missile launched from a Buk-M1 system.

Should such a full-scale experiment be carried out, nsnbc international would appreciate an invitation and unimpeded access to certified data. Without transparency towards independent media there is no transparency - Period.

Editor's note: *nsnbc international continues its independent investigation into the downing of MAS MH17 and will continue to do so, by journalism, by freedom of information requests, and by encouraging whistle-blowers to come forward. Our greatest obstacle is lack of funding. Please do get a free subscription at the bottom of this page and please donate a monthly amount equivalent to the price of one print newspaper per month to support independent investigative journalism. So far, less than 0.5% of our subscribers ever donate - that simply does not cut it if you say that you "appreciate independent media". - **Christof Lehmann**, editor-in-chief, nsnbc international.*

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