

Frame-up of Donbass and Russia: Asking hard questions about MH17 charges

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A member of the anti-fascist Donetsk People's Militia guards the site of the MH17

crash in July 2014. Ukraine blocked investigators from reaching the site.

On June 19, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) on the crash of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) [issued international arrest warrants](#) for three Russian citizens and one Ukrainian citizen. The four were charged with shooting down the civilian airliner over the Donetsk People's Republic on July 17, 2014, causing the deaths of all 298 passengers.

The JIT, based in the Netherlands and comprised of investigators from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia, the Netherlands and Ukraine, also claimed that the Russian government was ultimately responsible for the tragedy.

All those indicted — Igor Girkin (better known as Igor Strelkov), Sergey Dubinskiy, Oleg Pulatov and Leonid Kharchenko — were participants in the anti-fascist militias defending civilians in the Donbass mining region after the far-right government of Ukraine launched its “Anti-Terrorist Operation” in the spring of 2014.

That war, which Ukraine continues to wage today with U.S.-NATO funds and weaponry, has claimed more than 10,000 lives.

Dutch prosecutor Fred Westerbeke said that, while the suspects did not actually fire the missile at MH17, they are “just as punishable as the person who committed the crime.” He claimed that the accused anti-fascists obtained a BUK surface-to-air missile “with the goal to shoot a plane.”

Not mentioned was the [murderous Ukrainian air attack](#) on the capital of Lugansk on June 3, 2014, which targeted government and civilian buildings and killed at least 8 people.

The trial of the four anti-fascists is scheduled to begin March 9, 2020, in the Netherlands. They are to be tried in absentia if they are not captured or do not surrender.

Malaysia says 'no proof'

[Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad](#) immediately rejected the indictment, saying there was “no proof” of Russia’s involvement. Russia has flatly denied the charges.

“We are very unhappy because from the very beginning, it became a political issue on how to accuse Russia of the wrongdoing,” Mohamad told reporters. “Even before they examined the debris, they already said Russia [was responsible]. So it is very difficult for us to accept that.”

In a statement, the [People’s Militia of the Donetsk People’s Republic](#) declared: “In 2014, there were no BUK surface-to-air missile systems in service in the DPR army, as there are no such systems in service now. The militia could not be involved in the Boeing crash in Donbass.”

The so-called “investigation” in 2014 was marred by Ukraine delaying investigators from reaching the crash site, despite repeated pleas and guarantees of safe passage from Donetsk officials. Later, when the Organization for Security and Co-operation



in Europe investigators finally reached the site, Ukrainian military forces shelled the area, forcing them to flee.

Ukrainian

Many questions were raised at the time about who actually had access to weapons that could down a passenger plane, and why the plane was directed to fly over a war zone in the first place.

How long was Washington — the real power behind the JIT — waiting to pull the trigger on these charges over a plane crash that happened nearly five years ago?

On the same day, June 19, the Contact Group on the Minsk ceasefire agreements between the Donbass republics and Ukraine [met for the first time](#) since the election of new Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky. At the meeting, Donetsk and Lugansk presented a proposal for direct negotiations with Kiev to ease the economic blockade.

Was this a way for the U.S. and its European allies to ensure that there is no possibility of a deal to end the war or ease the blockade of Donetsk and Lugansk, or lessen tensions between Ukraine and Russia?

The MH17 frame-up is also a convenient way to ratchet up the demonization of Russia to justify further military buildup in Europe and continued economic sanctions against Moscow.

It seems that the long-suffering families of the MH17 victims are being treated as pawns in the Western imperialists' propaganda campaign against Russia — and to allow Ukraine to continue killing civilians in Donbass.

