

PAS Youth blasts MAS for using high-risk route
MalaysiaKini.com
July 18, 2014

PAS Youth has slammed Malaysia Airlines (MAS) for persisting in using the route in which the ill-fated flight MH17 was shot down last night, as it is known to be highly risky.

It's Youth chief Suhaizan Kaiat questioned MAS' rationale for still using that particular route over a conflict zone in Ukraine, when a transport plane was shot down just earlier this week.

“With such a dangerous record, MAS should have not used the Ukraine airspace as part of its route.

"This incident has become an eye-opener to all on airspace regulations, especially in conflicting countries to avoid future occurrences," Suhaizan (right) said in a statement today.

He urged the government to immediately ensure the national carrier's flight paths were not in any such danger.

“The government should take swift action in ensuring safer flight routes for all flights, especially avoiding routes in conflict-ridden countries.”

On Monday a Ukrainian An-26 transport plane was shot down by a surface-to-air missile while flying at 21,000 feet (6.2km), an attack that is believed to be carried out either by Ukrainian separatists allied with Moscow or possibly even a Russian military unit.

Four days later the Boeing 777-200 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur met with a similar fate while flying over the conflict zone in Ukraine at 33,000ft (10km), killing all 298 on board.

Ukraine today said they have "irrefutable evidence" that militants fighting to unite Eastern Ukraine with Russia are responsible for shooting down the flight with a heavy, Soviet-era ground-to-air missile as it entered their airspace.

According to a statement from the Ukrainian Embassy in Malaysia today, MH17 is the third aircraft shot down in the region, the other two being the An-26 transport plane and a Ukrainian Su-25 ground attack aircraft.

Meanwhile, New York Times reported that prior to the incident, some airlines such as Thai Airways and Lufthansa had been flying through Ukrainian airspace, while others, such as Air France and British Airways avoided it.

According to the flight tracking website Flightradar24, a Singapore Airlines and an Air India flight were about 25km away from MH17 when contact with the Boeing 777 was lost – all in Ukrainian airspace east of Donetsk.

“Less flights over Ukraine. More flights over Bulgaria and Turkey after MH17,” the website added on its Twitter account.

Separately, Bloomberg quoted Flightradar24 co-founder Mikael Roberston saying Ukrainian airspace had been a popular path between Europe and Asia, with 300 to 400 daily flights, but has dropped to about 100 a day in recent months due to the conflict with Russia.

“All airlines will be avoiding it like a plague,” the same report quoted Maybank analyst Mohshin Aziz as saying.

“Even today, Syria is in the middle of a war and commercial aircraft pass it every day - there hasn’t been an incident.”

The airspace over Ukraine was previously declared safe by the International Civil Aviation Organisation, according to MAS, and European air traffic controller Eurocontrol had said that only altitudes at 32,000 feet (9,750 metres) and below are restricted airspace in Ukraine.

MH17 was initially cruising at 31,000 feet (9,450 metres), but climbed to 33,000 feet upon reaching the Ukraine’s western border, about 80 minutes prior to reportedly being shot down.

'Bring perpetrators to justice'

Meanwhile, Suhaizan also urged the people responsible for the disaster to be tried and be handed a fair punishment.

“This is an international crime which involves multiple countries. These countries should rise and demand justice from those responsible for the incident.”

He also urged military action against the responsible parties as it involved violence upon civilians by militants.

“Military action should be taken against the accused as this act is a heartless act of terror.

“The international community surely would not be able to accept a civilian flight like MH17 being shot down.”

Meanwhile, Gerakan Youth chief Tan Keng Liang has urged PAS not to politicise the incident.

"The matter is still under investigation. PAS Youth should not try to pin the blame on MAS for the incident.

"We urge the Opposition to be considerate towards the victims of flight MH17 when issuing any statement on the matter," Tan (left) said, adding that the incident should not be capitalised by any party for its political interest.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak at a press conference this morning confirmed that the route taken by MH17 was approved by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO) and was not subjected to restrictions.

Copyright © 1999-2012 Mkini Dotcom Sdn. Bhd
Source: <http://www.malaysiakini.com/news/269160>