

## **Envoy sees foul in Malaysia's bar from MH17 probe**

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FREE The outgoing Russian ambassador to Malaysia today questioned why Malaysia was not included in the international investigation into the MH17 tragedy from the beginning.

Speaking to reporters at the Russian Embassy, Liudmila G Vorobyeva said it was “surprising” that Malaysia was not included when the investigations began, since MH17 aircraft belongs to the country.

“It is very surprising that Malaysia was excluded from the investigation team. Why were countries like Belgium included in the investigation the beginning, but not Malaysia, which owned the aircraft?” Vorobyeva asked

This same question was also raised by former prime minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad earlier this month.

Malaysia was only admitted as a full member of the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) into the tragedy on Dec 4, although Malaysia had been present in earlier meetings at The Hague that led to the formation of the JIT.

Flight MH17, with 298 passengers and crew on board, was shot down over the troubled eastern Ukraine while on its way to Kuala Lumpur from Amsterdam on July 17 this year. It was flying over separatist-held territory in East Ukraine when it was shot down.

Vorobyeva said the recent inclusion of Malaysia in the investigation would contribute to an “unbiased report being produced”.

She also took a swipe at the international investigators for taking so long to complete the investigation. According to her, the final report is supposed to be due somewhere in 2016.

“If you do not have anything to hide, if you are willing to go on with this investigation, why does it take so long?”

“In one-and-a-half years (from the incident), you have plenty of time to do anything, actually. I do not want to insinuate anything, I just want to know why it will take so long,” Vorobyeva said.

She added that it was “puzzling” that the investigation team has not done a reconstruction of the aircraft, which is the normal modus operandi in this type of incident.

“They (the investigators) gave the excuse that debris cannot be collected because of the on-going fighting but the fighting for the past few months has not been so bad,” she said, adding that the pro-Russian separatists have been willing to cooperate with the investigation.

'Russian government has been transparent'

The ambassador, whose term in Malaysia ends next month, clarified that the Russian government has been transparent and willing to help in the investigations by handing over evidence, despite claims that it was reluctant.

"We already have handed over the evidence. We are the only country to have given the full data and information on the incident. Not even the United States has done that.

"The data we submitted includes what we have on the activities of the Ukrainian air force, radar readings and information on the Buk missiles," Vorobyeva (left) said.

The MAS aircraft was said to have been shot down with a Buk missile, a medium-range surface-to-air missile that is designed to detonate near its target.

Separatist forces have denied shooting down MH17, while Russia has denied that it supplies arms to the separatists.

Both sides have blamed the Ukrainian government for shooting down MH17, while Ukraine also points fingers at the separatists.

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