

Confirmed: MH17 shot down by Buk missile
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The Dutch Safety Board has confirmed that Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17 was shot down by a Buk surface-to-air missile over eastern Ukraine last year.

Its chairman Tjibbe Joustra said the missile's warhead detonated on the left side of the aircraft's cockpit.

"MH17 was shot down by a Buk surface-to-air missile," he said when presenting the final report on the MH17 tragedy at the Gilze-Rijen air base, Netherlands today, which was aired live via international media.

MH17 was shot down while cruising at an altitude of 30,000ft and crashed in a tense area of Ukraine near the Russian border on July 17, 2014.

All 283 passengers and 15 crew onboard the Boeing 777 aircraft, which was en route to Kuala Lumpur from Amsterdam, perished.

Prime Minister Najib Abdul Razak (photo) said Malaysia will remain steadfast until those behind the heinous act are made to pay for their crimes.

"This was an unforeseeable act and, of the 160 flights that were on MH17's general route that day, not one was advised by the relevant authorities against any specific threat.

"But we now know that the plane was hit by a Russian-made Buk missile fired from rebel-held territory in eastern Ukraine.

"While this has long been speculated about, the fact that these chain of events have now been proven conclusively by the Dutch Safety Board mean that we must move forward towards ensuring that those responsible are held accountable for this murderous act," he said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai said as part of the joint investigation team, Malaysia remains single-minded in its pursuit of decisive action that will lead to prosecution of the trigger-happy criminals.

The report came out after 15 months of investigations undertaken by a joint investigation team from the Netherlands, Ukraine, Malaysia, Australia, United Kingdom, the United States and Russia.

Joustra said the board had established the cause of the crash on the basis of several sources including the weapon system used based on among other things, the damage pattern on the wreckage, the fragments found in the wreckage and in the bodies of crew members, and the way in which the aircraft broke up.

He said the findings were also supported by the data on the flight recorders, whereby the cockpit voice recorder picked up a sound peak during the final milliseconds.

Excluded other potential causes

Joustra said the board also excluded other potential causes, such as an explosion inside the aeroplane or an air-to-air missile.

"No scenario other than a Buk surface-to-air missile can explain this combination of facts," he said.

Joustra said the investigation had ruled out the possibilities of technical defects of the aircraft, air-to-air missile attack and meteor collision as the cause of the tragedy.

On the exact location where the missile was launched, Joustra said, additional forensics investigation would be needed to establish the exact launching location.

However, he said such investigation was outside the scope of the Dutch Safety Board's mandate.

Pertaining to the eastern part of Ukraine's airspace, he said the airspace was much in use, where between July 14 and 17 in 2014, 61 operators from 32 countries routed their flights through the airspace.

"On the day of the crash, until the airspace was closed, 160 commercial airliners flew over the area," he said.

He also said MAS prepared and operated flight MH17 in accordance with regulations.

"As the state of departure, the Netherlands had no responsibility to advise MAS (or KLM, as its code share partner) with regard to the chosen flight route," he said.

On July 14, five countries namely Malaysia, Australia, Belgium, the Netherlands and Ukraine had asked the UN security council to establish an international criminal tribunal to try those responsible for crimes connected to the downing of MH17.

However, Russia used its veto right in the security council to block the proposal on July 30.

Clarity to affected families

Meanwhile, Malaysian Airline System Bhd expressed its gratitude to the Dutch Safety Board for MH17 final investigation report.

In a statement today, it thanked the team for the detailed and exhaustive report which involved significant man hours and resources.

"We welcome the publication of the report and hope that it will give clarity to the affected families of the tragic incident.

"MAS would like to assure all next of kin that we shall continue to cooperate with the authorities on all matters pertaining to the loss of Flight MH17 and our support to the families will remain until all issues are completed," it said.

MAS said it was very grateful for the support from the Dutch government in dealing with all aspects of the tragedy and in leading the technical investigation.

The statement said MAS had worked very closely with the Dutch authorities and given full cooperation to the investigative team.

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