

Probe concludes missile from Russia downed Flight MH17 over Ukraine
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The Malaysia Airlines MH17 flight shot down over eastern Ukraine was struck by a BUK missile brought into the conflict zone from Russia, prosecutors said today on presenting the long-awaited findings of a criminal investigation into the crash.

The BUK missile defence system was later transported back to Russia after the plane was downed, Wilbert Paulissen of the Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team (JIT) said.

"The system was transported from Russian territory into eastern Ukraine and was later transported (back) on a white Volvo truck with a low-boy trailer," a statement from the team on the Netherlands' Public Prosecution Service website said.

The statement said that the BUK missile had been fired from farmland near the city of Pervomaiskyi, "which, at the time, was controlled by pro-Russian fighters."

The investigation sought to determine the type and origins of the ground-to-air rocket that downed the Boeing passenger plane in July 2014, killing all 298 people on board. Most of the passengers were Dutch.

JIT investigator Fred Westerbeke said that the team had gathered ample evidence to prosecute the perpetrators in a court of law, without giving further details on where and when a trial would take place.

One hundred investigators and public prosecutors worked on the investigation to analyse thousands of pieces of debris and half a million videos and photographs, Westerbeke said.

He added that the team listened to 150,000 intercepted telephone calls. One audio intercept was played at the press conference in Utrecht and appeared to show pro-Russian rebels calling for the missile launch.

The findings support conclusions drawn in a previous report which indicated that the plane, which was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was hit by a BUK surface-to-air missile fired by pro-Russian rebels.

Russia has repeatedly denied this claim, urging investigators to take its own research into account which it says shows Ukraine was behind the crash.

Kremlin spokesperson Dmitry Peskov pointed to Moscow's own "unambiguous" evidence which Russia says has been ignored by the international investigation team in comments carried by state news agency *Tass* today.

Moscow analysed primary radar data and found no evidence of a missile downing the plane, Peskov said ahead of the JIT's presentation of its findings.

"If there had been a missile, then it could have been launched from other territory," he added without elaborating.

- *dpa*

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