

**Russia to blame for downing MH17, says investigator**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
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Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was almost certainly shot down by a Russian missile in spite of the country's insistence on the contrary, a British investigator said in a documentary aired by Australia's 60 Minutes.

According to a report by The Mirror, Eliot Higgins and his team spent months uncovering and analysing YouTube videos as well as social media images posted by Russia's own soldiers, using software previously available only to the military.

Using a technique known as "geo-tagging", Higgins matched the backgrounds in the images to actual locations on Google Maps. He and his team were reportedly able to trace the path of a BUK surface-to-air missile from Russia's 53rd Air Defence Brigade base in Kursk to the crash site near Hrabrove in Ukraine.

After the crash, it was filmed driving back to the base with one missile missing, the report said.

"We could compare elements in the photo to elements in the photo of the missile launch being transported to separatists a few hours before MH17 was shot down," Higgins was quoted as saying.

"The power lines and even the tree branches in the photos matched.

"I'm absolutely positive it came from Russia."

Flight MH17 was en route from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was shot down over eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014. All 298 passengers and crew members on board the Malaysia Airlines jetliner – the majority of them Dutch – died.

Kiev and the West have claimed that the airliner was shot down in the conflict-torn area by separatist fighters using a BUK surface-to-air missile supplied by Russia. Moscow denies the charges, pointing the finger at Kiev.

A Dutch television station in March said it had proof that the Boeing 777 was shot down by a BUK missile based on an independent analysis of metal fragments one of its journalists removed from the crash site, said AFP.

The Dutch Safety Board, however, issued a statement saying there was nothing to prove that the fragment came from the missile which brought the plane down, and that its own conclusions would be confirmed by "multiple sources and not only from fragments".

According to 60 Minutes, Russia has condemned the images used by Higgins and his team as fakes. However, Higgins who is now a visiting research associate at King's College London remains confident that his theory is correct.

"It very unlikely [the missile launcher] was driven into rebel territory, the keys handed over, and the rebels told 'there you go just press that button to launch a missile'," he was quoted as saying.

"That just doesn't make sense."

Kiev in February signed a shaky peace deal with separatists in its troubled rebel-held east, where months of fighting have left more than 6,000 people dead.

The Netherlands has been tasked with leading the investigation into the cause of the crash. – May 18, 2015.

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