

Airspace Over Troubled Eastern Ukraine Should Have Been Closed - Dutch Safety Board
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KUALA LUMPUR, Oct 13 (Bernama) -- Ukraine had sufficient reason to close the airspace over the armed conflict zone in eastern Ukraine as a precaution before the Malaysia Airline's MH17 incident on July 17, 2014, according to Dutch Safety Board chairman, Tjibbe Joustra.

Joustra, in unveiling the final investigation report on the MH17 tragedy on Tuesday, noted that the airspace was much in use, where between July 14 and July 17 2014, 61 operators from 32 countries routed their flights through this airspace.

"None of the parties involved recognised the risks posed to overflying civil aircraft because of the armed conflict in the eastern part of Ukraine," he said at news conference that was telecast live on CNN from the Gilze-Rijen air base, Netherlands.

He added that on the day of the crash, until the airspace was closed, 160 commercial airlines had flown over the area.

Joustra said the Dutch Safety Board in the report also noticed that the current system of responsibilities with respect to flying over conflict areas was inadequate.

Joustra said this was because operators assume that unrestricted airspace are safe.

"When assessing the risk, operators do usually take into account the safety of departure and arrival locations, but not the safety of the country they fly over.

"When flying over a conflict area, an additional risk assessment is necessary," he said.

He said the Board also considers it extremely important for all parties involved in aviation - including states, international organisations such as the ICAO (International Civil Aviation Organisation) and IATA (International Air Transport Association), and operators, to exchange more information about the conflict areas and potential threats to civil aviation.

He said more attention should be paid to the development of conflicts, including any increase of military activity and shootings from the ground, when processing and interpreting this information.

"States involved in an armed conflicts should receive more incentives and better support to safeguard the safety of their airspace.

"In addition, the Dutch Safety Board is of the opinion that operators should give public account for their flight routes," Joustra added.

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