

Threatening Russia: The Unanswered Questions of Malaysian Airlines MH17

By [Mike Whitney](#)

Global Research, August 03, 2014

[Counterpunch](#)

Region: [Russia and FSU](#)

Theme: [US NATO War Agenda](#)

In-depth Report: [UKRAINE REPORT](#)

"Recent history has repeatedly proven that nothing said by Washington and its officials should be accepted at face value. No other government in the world has been implicated in so many egregious lies as the United States." Bill Van Auken, "[US lies and hypocrisy on Gaza and Ukraine](#)", World Socialist Web Site

"Mendaci neque quum vera dicit, creditor." Cicero ("A liar is not to be believed even when he speaks the truth.")

Without a shred of public evidence to support their claim that Moscow was involved in the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, the United States and Europe have levied a new round of sanctions on Russia. The sanctions, which are designed to restrict Russia's access to both capital and technology, will be imposed as soon as August 1, despite the fact that Moscow has repeatedly denied either involvement in the incident or of providing material support for the militants fighting in east Ukraine. Not surprisingly, Russia will not be given a chance to defend itself in court or present its case before an independent tribunal. Due process and the presumption of innocence are breezily jettisoned whenever US interests are involved. Instead, Washington will act as judge, jury and lord high executioner arbitrarily imposing penalties on the country that has provided hard evidence of what actually transpired prior to the crash using data it compiled from radar and satellite imagery. In contrast, the US hasn't lifted a finger to help the investigation even though it has the most advanced, state-of-the-art surveillance systems in the world and even though it had a satellite — capable of reading a license plate from outer space — hovering directly overhead at the time the aircraft blew up. And here's something else to consider from blogger Moon of Alabama:

"Pentagon officials told CNN (on Tuesday) that the Ukrainian government fired three ballistic missiles towards the federalists during the last 48 hours." ([Moon of Alabama](#))

If the Pentagon picked up the ballistic missile launches on their radar, they certainly saw the surface-to-air missiles that brought down MH17. Case closed.

So why hasn't Washington been more forthcoming with the information they have? Why are they basing their judgment on the nonsense they've gleaned from social media and Twitter feeds instead of spy-in-the-sky photos and satellite imagery? Why are they dragging their feet and obstructing the investigation? And why, for God sakes, why has Europe agreed to go along with this charade when they know there's not a scintilla of evidence linking Russia

to the downed plane?

These are just some of the questions that remain unanswered a full two weeks after MH17 was downed by what appears to have been a surface-to-air missile launched from a BUK platform somewhere in east Ukraine. (Although even that fact is now in dispute given that MH17 was being allegedly being shadowed by two Ukrainian warplanes. Some analysts believe the aircraft was actually destroyed by air-to-air missiles fired from one of the two Su25 interceptors.)

One thing that's clear, is that the lack of public evidence hasn't stopped the Obama administration from smearing Russian president Vladimir Putin in the media or blaming Moscow for the tragedy that killed 298 passengers. The campaign to hold Moscow responsible started just hours after MH17 crashed and has only intensified over the last two weeks. This is amazing considering that, most of what we know about the incident has been provided by Russia. For example, it was Russia that provided the information about the two Su25 interceptors and the US satellite. It was also Russia that came up with the photographic evidence that showed Kiev had deployed anti-air missile systems (BUK) around the area where flight MH17 was downed. The Kiev government has repeatedly denied claims that it had BUK systems in the area, but on Friday, Russian military analysts released satellite images that made mincemeat of those denials. Here's the story from RT:

"Satellite images Kiev published as 'proof' it didn't deploy anti-aircraft batteries around the MH17 crash site carry altered time-stamps and are from days after the MH17 tragedy, the Russian Defense Ministry has revealed.

The images, which Kiev claims were taken by its satellites at the same time as those taken by Russian satellites, are neither Ukrainian nor authentic, according to a Moscow statement.

The Defense Ministry said the images were apparently made by an American KeyHole reconnaissance satellite, because the two Ukrainian satellites currently in orbit, Sich-1 and Sich-2, were not positioned over the part of Ukraine's Donetsk Region shown in the pictures....

At least one of the images published by Ukraine shows signs of being altered by an image editor, the statement added." ("[Wrong time, altered images' Moscow slams Kiev's MH17 satellite data](#)", RT)

Ask yourself this, dear reader: Why would you provide "altered" photos that were taken on a different day to prove your innocence if you weren't guilty as hell? And why would the US go along with this farce unless they were involved too?

Like we said earlier, there's photographic evidence that Kiev had BUK systems operating in the area at the time of the crash. These "new" fake photos only increase the probability that it was a Ukrainian missile that brought down MH17. That's why the administration hasn't released any of its radar data or satellite imagery. It's because they know the truth.

Consider this: The Obama administration has never inquired about the communications recordings between Air Traffic Control (ATC) and the aircrew of MH17.

Why? Don't they want to know what happened?

Nor have they asked for:

“The information on the specific instructions from the Ukraine Aviation Administration to the air traffic control units of Ukraine with relation to the imposed restrictions on the airspace utilization in the area of Donetsk and Lugansk.” (RT)

Nor are they interested in why MH17 was rerouted over a warzone, 200 kilometers north of all previous flights for the last two weeks. Or whether MH17 was in fact being followed by Ukrainian warplanes. Or whether Ukrainian SAM units were active in the area before the incident took place.

How does one explain the Obama administration’s total lack of interest in any area of the current investigation? Doesn’t that suggest that they already know what happened? And doesn’t that also suggest that they’re trying to prevent the facts from leaking out?

Readers should take a quick look at the 28 questions that Russia’s Air Transport Agency would like the Ukrainian government to answer in order to clarify what happened to MH17. ([See questions here.](#)) This is the approach the Obama administration would take if they were genuinely interested in finding out what happened. The reason the administration hasn’t taken this approach, is because they’re not really interested in what happened. Why is that?

Most of the lies about MH17 have been coming from the State Department, where just last Sunday, Secretary of State John Kerry appeared on all five Sunday morning talk shows claiming that Moscow had sent “a convoy of about 150 vehicles with armored personnel carriers, multiple rocket launchers, tanks, artillery, all of which crossed over from Russia into the eastern part of Ukraine and was turned over to the separatists.”

Imagine making a bold statement like that on five different news programs without even one of the hosts demanding evidence to support the claim. Such is the state of the media in the US today.

So far, neither Kerry nor any of the US Intel agencies have produced proof that Russia is providing material support for rebels in east Ukraine. Zilch. It’s all uncorroborated speculation and unsubstantiated rumor.

Do you remember Kerry said he had proof that the Syrian government was responsible for the Aug. 21 Sarin gas attack outside Damascus, an incident that he hoped would lead the US to launch a war against Syria?

It was a lie. Here’s a clip from Robert Parry:

“A new report by two American weapons specialists, entitled “Possible Implications of Faulty US Technical Intelligence in the Damascus Nerve Agent Attack,” makes clear that the case presented by Kerry and the Obama administration was scientifically impossible because the range of the key rocket carrying Sarin was less than a third of what the U.S. government was claiming.” ([“The Mistaken Guns of Last August”](#), Robert Parry, Consortium News)

And what about Kerry’s grandstanding repudiation of the fake leaflets in Donetsk that said “Jews had to identify themselves as Jews ... or suffer the consequences.”

Right. That was another whopper Kerry used to promote his attack on Russia.

And what about this from CNN: "[Kerry: 'Drunken separatists' interfering at MH17 crash site](#)". Or this from Vice News "[MH17 Crash Site Reportedly Looted by Rebels](#)".

It's all just more outlandish speculation intended to smear Russia. There's a great article in the Wall Street Journal by journalist Paul Sonne titled "[After Flight 17 Crash, Agony, Debris and Heartbreak in Ukraine Villages](#)" that dispels a lot of the lies that have popped up in the media in the last couple weeks. First of all, the rebels have not prevented inspectors from accessing the site (as Kerry claims) Here's Sonne in an interview on NPR's "[All Things Considered](#)" on Wednesday:

"The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe has actually gotten very good access to the site with the exception of the first day they showed up, which was the day after the crash where their time there was limited to 75 minutes, and they said that they weren't given access to every piece of the crash site that they had wanted to see. So after the sort of first day standoff that they experienced with some of the rebel militants, it did seem like they were getting pretty full access to the crash site. The problem was that the investigation team, which is now being led by the Netherlands, wasn't ready and didn't, in fact, really arrive in Donetsk until a few days ago. And after they finally assembled in Donetsk, it took, you know, about a week or more. Then, fighting had already started to encompass the crash site. And the reason that they're not getting access to the crash site now is not because the rebels are not allowing them to go to the crash site. It's because the crash site has turned into an active, violent fighting zone."

So the inspectors have had access to the site the whole time except just recently when US-backed goons from the Ukrainian army resumed hostilities in violation of their promise to honor a temporary ceasefire. It sounds like Kiev might have something they want to hide at the crash site, doesn't it?

Meanwhile, [according to the Independent](#), "John Kerry accused the separatists of displaying "an appalling disrespect for human decency" in carrying on fighting close to the area."

Is Kerry lying again or is he just confused about the facts?

As far as the looting and drunken disrespect for the corpses of the victims; that's all BS too. Sonne paints an entirely different picture of what took place on the ground. Just check out some of his description and see if it squares with Kerry's breakdown:

"The plane's cockpit and dozens of bodies plummeted into Rozsypne, about 2 miles from Petropavlivka. One body fell through a woman's roof. A pilot strapped to a seat wound up next to a flight attendant in a nearby field. ...Charred remains of an engine, landing gear and wings fell in a fireball next to Hrabove, with a tumbling storm cloud of at least 70 bodies, some of them largely intact...

No villagers on the ground died, but they are scared of what they might find next...

"We thought it was the end of the world," the Orthodox priest says. He stayed on the ground in prayer, preparing to meet God, and then ran up the hill as burning pieces of the plane's undercarriage and landing gear pelted a field like

bombs. Then came a hail of bodies: arms, heads and fingers.

Farmers dashed to the village, afraid it would be engulfed by an inferno. Hrabove Mayor Vladimir Berezhnoi screamed at drivers and motorcyclists to get off the road as fire rolled across a field. When he saw bodies, Mr. Berezhnoi yelled at adults to take their children home.

A few miles away, Oleg Miroshnichenko, a retired miner who became the mayor of Rozsypne about 13 years ago, felt panic as he heard two loud blasts and watched the remains of about 40 passengers rain down on yards and homes. His phone started ringing off the hook.

"There's a body here, a body there, another body," he says...

"In mines, you don't remove a body until they investigate it," he says.

Villagers and emergency workers decided to start bagging bodies that were rotting in the sun. Local miners joined the effort. Heartbroken residents had been pleading in tears for the bodies' removal." (["After Flight 17 Crash, Agony, Debris and Heartbreak in Ukraine Villages"](#), Wall Street Journal)

See? These people were deeply traumatized by the experience, they weren't throwing bodies around and disrespecting the dead. That's pure bunkum, just like the claims that Russia has been firing rounds into Ukraine is bunkum. Just like the leaflets ordering "Jews to register or face deportation" were bunkum. It's all bunkum. For whatever reason, the State Department doesn't give a rip about its credibility anymore. They'll say just about anything as long as they can skewer Moscow.

On Friday, State Department spokesperson Marie Harf was challenged by Associated Press reporter Matthew Lee, who demanded that Harf back up her claims that Russia has been firing rounds into Ukraine with something more substantial than the rubbish she'd read on Twitter. Here's what the AP journalist said:

"I think that it would be best for all concerned here if when you make an allegation like that you're able to make it up with something more than just 'because I said so. You guys get up at the UN security council making these allegations, the secretary [of the State Dept., John Kerry] gets on the Sunday shows and makes these allegations, and then when you present your evidence to back up those allegations, it has appeared to, at least for some, fall short of definitive proof."

The clearly-flummoxed Harf started backpeddling like crazy, unable to provide any hard evidence that her claims of Russian complicity were anything more than a complete fabrication. As it happens, the so called "satellite imagery data" and "electronic intelligence" that was used to incriminate Moscow was originally posted on coup-backer Geoffrey Pyatt's Twitter account, which further underlines the fact that the real objective was to shape public opinion with propaganda not to reveal the truth. Here's a bit more from Antiwar.com:

"During the past several days, there has not been a single report out of Ukraine of an artillery strike against any of their military bases, anywhere in the country. ...And this is Ukraine we're talking about, which comes up with its own dubious stories of Russian attacks on a near daily basis. If Russia was

carried out concerted shelling against Ukrainian military targets, Ukraine would be harping on about it constantly. They aren't even alleging anything close to that is happening. ("[US Invents Reports of Russia Attacking Ukraine Bases](#)", antiwar.com)

A Twitter account, for god sakes! The US State Department is basing its theory on the crap they picked up on Twitter. It's ridiculous.

Then there's the State Department's claim that Russia is massing troops along the border, another fairy tale that's turned out to be complete baloney. In fact, an International team of inspectors were sent to Russia to check things out and here's what the found:

"No instances of violations by Russia along the Ukrainian border had been registered by the inspectors," the ministry said. "The last four months have witnessed 18 separate inspections along the Ukrainian border with the Russian Federation, all in line with the Vienna Open Skies Treaty and the Vienna agreement of 2011." ([RT](#))

If you're starting to think that everything you've read about the MH17 crash is bullshit, you're probably right. There's not much truth to most of it.

But why would the administration lie about things that are so easy to disprove? What's the point? Are they just getting sloppy and apathetic or is something else going on here?

To get a handle on what's really going on, we have to understand that Ukraine is not just another bloody afterthought like Iraq, Afghanistan or Syria, none of which would dramatically impact the US's role as the world's only superpower. Ukraine is different. Ukraine is an essential part of Washington's plan to pivot to Asia. If Washington is unable to achieve its objectives in Ukraine — create a chokepoint for vital resources flowing from Russia to the EU, establish NATO bases in the heart of Eurasia, and drive a wedge between Moscow and Brussels — then the plan to maintain US global hegemony for the next century will fail. And if the plan fails, then China will gradually become the world's biggest and most powerful economy, economic ties between Moscow and Europe grow stronger, and the US will slide into irreversible decline. Get the picture?

This is the scenario that Washington wants to avoid at all cost. That's why the anti-Russia hysteria in the media has been so ferocious and unrelenting. That's why the State Department assisted in the coup d'état that toppled the Ukrainian government and triggered the crisis. And that's why ruling elites of all stripes have thrown their support behind a policy that recklessly pits one nuclear-armed adversary against another. It's because the bigshot money-guys who run this country are bound and determined to be the Kingfish for the next hundred years even if it means plunging the world into the abyss of a third world war. That's just a chance they're willing to take.

Mike Whitney lives in Washington state. He is a contributor to [Hopeless: Barack Obama and the Politics of Illusion](#) (AK Press). Hopeless is also available in a [Kindle edition](#). He can be reached at fergiwhitney@msn.com.

[**Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page**](#)

[**Become a Member of Global Research**](#)

Articles by: [Mike Whitney](#)

Disclaimer: The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: publications@globalresearch.ca

www.globalresearch.ca contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: publications@globalresearch.ca