

The Victims of MH17 Deserve More than the Shoddy Lies Perpetrated by Politicians and Media

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Global Research, June 09, 2020

[Dissident Voice](#) 7 June 2020

Region: [Asia](#)

Theme: [History](#), [Law and Justice](#)

The ABCs Insider program broadcast each Sunday morning is one of the ABCs most watched and most important programs. The three guests are drawn from the country's mainstream media outlets. This is perhaps itself a limitation considering the broad range and frequently high standards of much political analysis in the country are non-mainstream outlets. The invited person subjected to questioning by the show's host is almost invariably a politician drawn from either the Liberal or Labor parties.

One would be unwise to expect much more than a partisan view from the weekly political guest. It is, however, not unreasonable to think that the members of the panel might be expected to offer a factual analysis, albeit tempered by the political stance of their employee newspapers.

On the program broadcast on 7 June 2020 both the political guest, Labor deputy leader Richard Miles, and one of the panelists, the *Sydney Morning Herald's* David Crowe offered an opinion that was stunning in its disregard for the body of information that is now available on the topic of the comment.

That topic was the shooting down of Malaysian airlines MH 17 in July 2015 with the loss of life of 298 passengers and crew. The Dutch lost the largest proportion of the passengers, followed by Australia with 38 citizens and residents, then Malaysia and a smattering of citizens from a number of other countries.

An inquiry team was immediately established led by the Dutch, with other representatives coming from Australia, Belgium and Ukraine. There were three surprises in this contingent. The Dutch and Australians were not unexpected as having lost a significant number of their citizens. The inclusion of Belgium was puzzling and perhaps, in the light of subsequent events, only explicable in their role as the host of the NATO military alliance.

The second surprise was the inclusion of Ukraine. Although the tragedy occurred over Ukrainian territory it was clearly not an accident but the result of unfriendly criminal activity by a party or parties then unknown. Ukraine was at the very least a possible culprit.

The third surprise was the exclusion of Malaysia which as the owner and operator of the flight would normally be an automatic inclusion in any inquiry. Their exclusion was unexplained at the time. It was only later that it emerged that the four investigating countries had reached an agreement between themselves, the details of which have never been fully disclosed.

What is known however, is that part of the agreement provided that no statement on the

investigation would be released without the unanimous agreement of all four members. To describe this as astonishing would be an understatement. It was one of the early clues that the investigation would not be an impartial investigation, but would in effect follow a political agenda. This has indeed proven to be the case.

What was also unknown at the time, but revealed relatively recently by the Malaysians, was that they had sent a team to the Ukraine immediately. Thanks to the assistance of Ukrainian rebels then (and now) engaged in a bitter war with the Kiev government, the plane's black boxes had been retrieved. The rebels handed those over to the Malaysians who returned to Malaysia where they were examined before being in turn given to the British for further analysis.

It was with this information that the Malaysians then negotiated their entry into the inquiry team in late 2015. It was one of the features of this case that the Malaysian viewpoint has been almost entirely absent from the Dutch and Australian reporting of the case.

It did not take long for the Dutch, Australians and Ukrainians to blame Russia for the tragedy despite the fact, then and now, of anyone being able to offer even a remotely plausible reason for Russia to have shot down the civilian airliner of a friendly country. The improbability was compounded by the fact that the tragedy occurred over Ukrainian territory.

The implausibility of this version of events was enhanced when a British organisation known as Bellingcat published what they claimed to be pictures of a Russian missile firing weapon system returning to Russia from the area where the alleged missile had been fired from.

It is one of the telling features of this case that later evidence was disclosed, but not reported in the Australian media, that there were no Russian weapons capable of firing a BUK missile (the alleged weapon used) in the vicinity of the area it would have to be in to have fired the allegedly fatal missile. Neither for that matter was there any Ukrainian BUK missile facility within range, although the Ukrainians certainly possessed such missiles, a left over from the days when it was a part of the old Soviet Union and used Russian supplied weapons.

The other relevant point about the shoot down was the claim by then United States secretary of state John Kerry that United States satellites overhead at the time (observing what was a war zone) had seen exactly what had happened. There is no reason to doubt Mr Kerry's claim. It is also likely that the Russians had overhead satellites, for exactly the same reason.

The important point, however, is that the United States has never produced that evidence to the Dutch led inquiry or anybody else. Given that such photos would in all probability be conclusive of the argument, their nonproduction leads to an irresistible inference. They do not support the Dutch-Ukrainian version. It is a safe assumption that if they did, we would have been inundated with those pictures, *ad nauseam*, ever since.

What the Russians and the Ukrainian rebels have said all along was that the plane was brought down by the actions of two Ukrainian jet fighters observed by independent eye witnesses at the time. The presence of multiple bullet holes in the plane's recovered fuselage further confirms this interpretation of how MH 17 came to its tragic end.

There is no obvious reason as to why the Ukrainians would shoot down a civilian airliner. The first of the three most likely possibilities are that it was a genuine accident, but if that was the case why not admit it, plead accident and pay appropriate compensation.

The second possibility is that it was a case of mistaken identity. It is known that a plane carrying Russia's President Putin was in the general vicinity at that time, returning from an official trip to South America. Putin's official plane carries very similar markings to Malaysian airlines.

The third possibility, which frankly is rather horrible to contemplate, is that it was a deliberate attempt to frame Russia, the major supporter of the Ukrainian rebel groups (overwhelmingly Russian speaking). It should not be forgotten also that the former Russian territory of Crimea (gifted to Ukraine by Khrushchev in Soviet days) had voted overwhelmingly to return to Russia. This had outraged the Ukrainian government who had vowed to retake Crimea by force. The United States also had plans to take over the Russian naval base on Crimea, thereby depriving Russia of a vital warm water port.

All of these facts make the rather ludicrous threat by then Australian prime minister Abbott of military action in support of Ukraine's attempt to force Crimea back within its fold all the more ridiculous. More importantly, it makes the allegations of Messrs Marles and Crowe completely unsupportable. Australian government policy towards Ukraine, then as now, completely ignores the fact that it is a neo-fascist regime that came to power by violently overthrowing the legitimate Ukrainian government.

Both men ought to have known better. Indeed, it is probable both do know better but because Australia is a loyal supporter of the West's official anti-Russian line, have gone along with helping perpetrate a manifest fiction, unsupported by the five years of evidence that have been accumulated in the interim. The Moscow based Australian journalist Jphn Helmer is one of the very few to have consistently followed this Dutch led travesty and disclosed the evidence as it has emerged.

That the Australian mainstream media have chosen to ignore that evidence, to actively conceal the investigative role played by Australian forces in the early stages, and to perpetuate a gross falsehood does neither Mr Marles nor Mr Crowe or any organisation they represent any credit at all.

The families of the victims of this tragedy do not need the perpetuation of shoddy lies for geopolitical purposes. Messrs Marles and Crowe do neither themselves, their country, nor the organisations they represent any credit by helping to perpetuate a shameful lie.

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