

Dutch dismiss reports alleging MH17 downed by Buk missile

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A crane carries wreckage of the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 plane (flight MH17) at the site of the plane crash near the settlement of Grabovo in the Donetsk region November 16, 2014. (Reuters / Antonio Bronic)

The Netherlands has denied reports that the Malaysia Airlines plane was downed by a Buk missile, killing all 298 passengers and crew last July.

The Dutch Safety Board (DSB), which is investigating the cause of the crash, responded to reports released earlier by Netherlands broadcaster RTL alleging that the flight MH17 was downed by a Russian-made anti-aircraft missile system.

"The investigation into the cause of the accident is in full progress and focuses on many more sources than only the shrapnel," the DSB stated.

"Additional investigation material is welcome, but it is imperative that it can be indisputably shown that there is a relationship between the material and the downed aircraft," the agency emphasized Thursday in a statement.

RTL claimed on Thursday that a metal fragment from the crash site of the plane allegedly matches a surface-to-air Buk rocket. The piece was recovered by a Dutch journalist from the village of Grabovo several months ago, close to where the plane was brought down last year.

Earlier this month Ukrainian media made a gaffe, misquoting Dutch investigators as having accused Russia of

shooting down the Malaysian Airlines flight.

The potpourri of reports by Ukrainian media, including those by major outlets like TV channel TSN or Segodnya daily, all claimed that the Dutch team had already come to the conclusion it was a Russian Buk surface-to-air missile that shot down the Boeing airliner.

"I can say for sure they are not correct," Dutch Public Prosecution Service (OM) spokesman Wim de Bruin told RT. *"We are not yet ready to take any conclusion,"* he pointed out.

On Thursday, Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov slammed a news report about witness statements, in which people claimed they had seen a rocket fired at the time of the crash.

"Attempts at distorting facts, enforcing theories as to what could have happened continue to exist, with some based on openly dirty intentions," Lavrov told journalists. He remarked that a Reuters report on *"new evidence on the downing of the Malaysian plane over Ukraine"* from last week looked like the *"respected agency"* had published *"a so-called stovepiping."*

Lavrov pointed out that some witnesses *"contradict one another, and express things amusing for any specialist. For instance, some wiggling rocket, separating rocket stages, blue clouds of smoke."* He also stressed that information was provided by alleged eyewitnesses, who somehow managed to see the crash despite being 25km (15 miles) away from it, in cloudy weather.

RTL claims it had the shrapnel tested by international forensic experts, including defense analysts IHS Jane's in London, who said it matched the explosive charge of a Buk.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH17, heading from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, crashed over restive eastern Ukraine on July 17, 2014.

Kiev, along with some Western states, rushed to put the blame on eastern Ukraine militias and Russia.

A report on the official investigation published in September 2014 said the crash was a result of structural damage caused by a large number of high-energy objects that struck the Boeing from the outside. The report did not specify what the objects were, where they came from or who was responsible.

The Russian Defense Ministry meanwhile shared radar data pointing to other possibilities in the July tragedy, including an attack by a Ukrainian Sukhoi-25 fighter jet, which was said to have been tracking the passenger plane.