

Netherlands to resume MH17 criminal case hearing amid Russian propaganda moves

12 czerwca 2020

With the COVID-19 pandemic slowing in Europe, the Netherlands will resume its hearings on the MH17 criminal case on June 8.

This is good news for Ukraine which has been working together with the Netherlands, Malaysia, Australia, and Belgium to conduct the international criminal investigation of the cause of the crash of flight MH17 and those thought to be responsible.

Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, a passenger plane traveling from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, was shot down over Ukraine's war-torn Donbas on July 17, 2014. The crash killed all the 283 passengers and 15 crew members. There were nationals of ten states among the dead.

In June 2019, the Joint Investigation Team (JIT) announced that it had identified four suspects involved in the crash, including three Russian nationals. A trial against them began in the Netherlands on March 9 but the scheduled hearings were soon disrupted by a novel coronavirus that had gripped most of the continent.

However, as the trial resumes, so will Russia's attempts to influence the positions of the JIT investigation team member countries.

Russia's President Vladimir Putin has been busy trying to amend the country's Constitution in connection with the future ruling of the Hague Tribunal in the MH17 case. One of the prominent Russian economists Andrei Illarionov voiced his concerns over these unexpected changes to the Constitution.

According to him, by the time the Hague Tribunal adopts its decision, the Russian Constitution, at Putin's insistence, should contain a clear provision allowing it to fail to observe the expected sentence by the Netherlands Court.

The Russian Federation is on the verge of failing to investigate the MH17 crash. Even "former employees" of the Russian Security Services do not believe in the success of Russian propaganda. Lately, Igor Girkin (Strelkov), a former Russian intelligence officer and former "Minister of Defence" of the so-called Donetsk People's Republic, who is charged in the MH17 case, told the Times magazine that he was "morally responsible" for the death of 298 people in the crash of the MH17 flight. Girkin was adamant that the pro-Russian separatists under his command "did not bring down the plane" making it clear that the Russian military is to blame for the crash.

Identifying those responsible for the tragedy has been challenging.

The international investigation team Bellingcat, the Insider and BBC managed to identify one of the key figures in the criminal case, which was previously known as "Vladimir Ivanovich." This is Colonel-General Andrei Burlaka, Deputy Head of the Border Service of the Federal Security Service (FSB), who, judging by phone intercepts, was responsible for the transfer of weapons from Russia to Donbas.

Immediately after the first sessions of the Dutch court in March, Leonid Kharchenko, a member of the Donetsk People's Republic military group, was detained in Russia-occupied Donetsk and charged in the case of the 2014 plane downing. He was detained outside his home in Donetsk on March 11, two days after the start of the trial in the Netherlands. This way Russia is trying to prevent suspects from being brought before the Hague Tribunal.

Back in 2018, the JIT investigation group presented evidence of the involvement of the Russian military and political leadership in the MH17 disaster. They found that the Russian air-defense system BUK-M1 belonged to the 53rd Air Defence Brigade based in Kursk.

According to data transmitted to the Hague District Court, the BUK-M1 was brought from the Kursk region to Donbas, which is currently controlled by Russian mercenaries. The missile system was guarded by dozens of Russian military and Russia-backed separatists in the Donbas.

Despite all the evidence, Putin has been actively trying to convince the world that Russia was not to blame for the destruction of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17.

He reportedly targeted Dutch politicians and civil society, according to a report released in April by the Netherlands' intelligence service, the AIVD. A pacifist group called Global Rights of Peaceful People (GRPP), whose Dutch branch was incorporated in 2019 spreads misinformation about MH17 and tries to engage with the left-wing of Dutch politics.

In late 2019 they organized a press conference in the Hague entitled 'Call for Justice MH17.' The centerpiece of the event was a documentary by pro-Kremlin reporter Max van der Werf and former Russia Today journalist Yana Yerlashova. Its quality may be judged by the fact that, according to an article by van der Noordaa and Coen van de Ven in [groene.nl](https://www.groene.nl), Yerlashova reportedly moved some of the aircraft debris to undermine the official investigation. However, despite its lack of credibility, this film has convinced many people in the Netherlands and elsewhere that Russia might not have destroyed the aircraft. Both Van der Werf and Yerlashova are also actively engaged in spreading Russian propaganda regarding the MH17 case through an online outlet called Bonanza Media.

Putin and the Russian military leadership are personally

responsible for the MH17 downing. Russia's involvement in the attack on the airliner has already been proved: the Russian leadership should be held responsible for the deployment of the BUK missile launcher, which was used to destroy the MH17. Investigation teams in the Netherlands, Australia, G7 countries, the EU and NATO officially agreed with the conclusions of international experts.

Authorship: Political Ecological Economics

Source: WolneMedia.net