MH17 downed by missile brought into Ukrain from Russia, concludes Dutch-led probe; Moscow say

28/09/2016 21:29 by admin

Nieuwegein (Netherlands): Malaysian Airlines flight MH17 was shot down by a Buk missile brought into eastern Ukraine from Russia, Dutch-led criminal investigators said today.

The crash site of MH17 near the village of Grabovo, Ukraine (July 17, 2014)

The Joint Investigation Team (JIT) led by Dutch officials said that they have â€œirrefutable evidenceâ€• that the Boeing 777 was shot down by Buk 9M38 missile, killing all 298 people onboard. Â

The missile, brought from Russia, was fired from a village under the control of pro-Russian rebels. Â

While the Ukraine rebels have rejected probe findings and have denied downing the jet, Moscow has described the inquiry as "biased" and "politically motivated". Â

"Russia is disappointed that the situation around the investigation of the Boeing catastrophe is not changing," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement.

"The conclusions... Confirm that the investigation is biased and politically motivated," Zakharova added. Â

Dutch-led criminal investigators said Wednesday they have solid evidence that a Malaysian jet was shot down by a Buk missile moved into eastern Ukraine from Russia.

Wilbert Paulissen, head of the Central Crime Investigation department of the Dutch National Police, said communications intercepts showed that pro-Moscow rebels had called for deployment of the mobile surface-to-air weapon, and reported its arrival in rebel-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

"Taking into the account the large amount and diversity of the other evidence that the JIT gathered, we have no doubt about the correctness of the conclusions that we present today. And the conclusion is that Flight MH17 on 17 July 2014 was brought down with a Buk rocket that was launched from the agriculture field at Pervomaysk and that the (missile) system arrived from the Russian Federation and was returned there afterwards,â€• investigators said. Â

The conclusions were billed as results of a two-year Dutch-led criminal probe of the disaster that claimed 298 lives.

A separate investigation by Dutch safety officials last year concluded that the Amsterdam-to-Kuala Lumpur flight was downed by a Buk missile fired from territory held by pro-Russian rebels.

Dutch police spokesman Thomas Aling said the joint investigation findings differ in that they are designed to be solid enough to be used as evidence in a criminal trial. Where and when a trial might take place is still to be determined, Aling said.

Russia has consistently denied allegations that pro-Moscow rebels in eastern Ukraine were responsible. On Monday, the Russian military said it has new radio-location data that show the missile that downed the Boeing 777 did not originate from rebel-controlled territory, and said it would turn the data over to investigators.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov reiterated that assertion on Wednesday ahead of the Dutch report.

"If there was a rocket it could only have been launched from a different area," he told reporters, referring to Russian radar data. "You can't argue with it, it can't be discussed."

A Ukraine representative said that his country would do "everything possible" to assist the continuing investigation.

"Ukraine is more interested than anyone in an objective and unbiased investigation of this crime and we will do everything possible to provide all the necessary assistance from our side. We did everything possible to make sure the evidence you saw today and most of the evidence we didnâ€™t show today could be used in investigation and court in the future," Dmitry Storozhuk, first deputy prosecutor-general of Ukraine, said.

In the Joint Investigation Team, Dutch police and judicial officials have been working with counterparts from Australia, Belgium, Malaysia and Ukraine, seeking to gather the best possible evidence for use in prosecution of the perpetrators.

They have faced extraordinary challenges: the crime scene in Ukraine's eastern Donetsk oblast where the plane crashed on July 17, 2014, killing all aboard, was located in an active war zone, and during the days following the crash pro-Kremlin militants limited access to the site.

Eleven containers crammed with debris from the jetliner were ultimately brought to the Netherlands. A research team took soil samples in eastern Ukraine and established the location of cellphone towers and the layout of the local telephone network.

Forensic samples were taken from passengers' and crew members' bodies and luggage, and satellite data and communications intercepts were scrutinized. The team also appealed for information from witnesses who may have seen the missile launch.

About two-thirds of the passengers aboard MH17 were Dutch nationals; the crew members were Malaysians. Malaysia proposed setting up an international tribunal to try those responsible for the plane's destruction, but Russia vetoed a U.N. Security Council resolution in favor of a tribunal.

- (With AP inputs)