

# Dutch MH17 findings based on flimsy and partial evidence

By Richard Bardon

On 13 October the Dutch Safety Board (DSB), chaired by former National Antiterrorism Co-ordinator Tjibbe Joustra, released the long-awaited findings of the international Joint Investigation Team (JIT)—comprising investigators from the Netherlands, Australia, Belgium, Malaysia and Ukraine—on the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 over the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine in July 2014<sup>1</sup>. Held up by Australia's government and news

media as definitive proof of Russia's culpability for the disaster, in reality the report is nothing of the sort. While obviously intending to *imply* that Russia is to blame by way of its supposed proxies in the Self-Defence Forces of the self-proclaimed Donetsk People's Republic (DPR), the DSB even states that its report “does not address questions of blame and liability”. Moreover, although it is stated categorically in the report's summary that “The weapon used was a 9N314M-model warhead carried on the 9M38-series of missiles, as installed on the Buk surface-to-air missile [SAM] system”, a perusal of the evidence upon which that assertion depends reveals it to be scant indeed, and of doubtful provenance.

## Report at odds with experimental results

The precise identification of the warhead hangs on the presence of three distinctive bowtie-shaped metal fragments recovered from the bodies of the captain and co-pilot, and a fourth, lodged in the aircraft's cockpit. According to the Dutch National Aerospace Laboratory (NLR), which analysed the damage to the aircraft's remains on behalf of the DSB, “Of the investigated warheads only the 9N314M contains the unique bowtie shaped fragments found in the wreckage. The damage observed on the wreckage in amount of damage, type of damage, boundary and impact angles of damage number and density of hits, size of penetrations and bowtie fragments found in the wreckage, is consistent with the damage caused by the 9N314M warhead used in the 9M38 and 9M38MI BUK surface-to-air missile.”<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the NLR did not even consider any of the other 20-odd types of SAMs operational in the Russian Federation and Ukraine that could theoretically have been available to either of the armed forces involved—the DPR forces and those of the Kiev regime. Instead, it produced computer models to ‘prove’ the version of events most convenient to the blame-Russia-for-everything school: MH17 had fallen foul of a modern version of the Buk, identical to those in service with the Russian military and launched from an area held by those whom the media like to name “Russian-backed separatists”. The Buk's manufacturer, Russian state armourer Almaz-Antey, has confirmed that the 9N314M is indeed the only warhead containing the bowtie-shaped



Left, the signature bowtie-shaped holes left by the 9N314M warhead's “double-T” shrapnel. MH17 (right) lacks similar damage. Photos: left, Almaz-Antey; right, Dutch Safety Board

projectiles—which they call “double-T strike elements”—and demonstrated that, by virtue of that very fact, the scenario portrayed by the DSB was physically impossible.

The recovery of the tell-tale shrapnel having been announced in the DSB's 1 June preliminary report, Almaz-Antey engineers conducted and meticulously recorded a physical experiment to test the theory. Upon detonation of a 9N314M warhead beside a set of aluminium panels simulating the outer skin of an airliner, they found that the distinctive bowtie-shaped projectiles left equally distinctive bowtie-shaped holes, and lots of them. Of the 7,800 elements in each warhead, about 2,600 (one third) were of the double-T type. MH17 displays no such damage. Thus, “it became absolutely evident that if the Malaysian Boeing was downed by a BUK missile, it was done with an old Buk model which does not have double-T iron strike elements”, Almaz-Antey CEO Yan Novikov told a Moscow press conference in late July<sup>3</sup>. All data from the experiment were forwarded to the DSB for consideration, but were ignored.

Almaz-Antey then conducted a second experiment, the results of which it announced at a press conference on 13 October, the same day as the DSB report came out. Simulating the Dutch-prescribed scenario, a 9M38MI missile was held aloft by a scaffold alongside the cockpit of an Ilyushin 86 (similar in construction to the Boeing 777), in the configuration described by the DSB, and detonated. Seven cameras recorded a pattern of damage almost perpendicular to that suffered by MH17, and extending much farther down the fuselage. Also, whereas MH17's left engine was extensively damaged, aluminium panels simulating its position went unscathed by the test blast. The double-T strike elements once again made many neat bowtie-shaped holes, and most of them also punched straight through the opposite wall of the cockpit. Almaz-Antey concluded that, assuming MH17 had been hit by a Buk missile at all, it could not have intercepted the aircraft at the angle specified in the DSB report. Therefore, they said that if a surface-to-air missile were at fault, it must have been fired from an area controlled by the Kiev regime, rather than from where the DPR militias were operating. Novikov reiterated his company's earlier finding that the only Buk-compatible warhead that might fit the evidence was an

old model, lacking double-T elements, and further noted that, having been discontinued in 1986, these warheads had reached the end of their 25-year service life in 2011, whereupon they were withdrawn from service in Russia. Ukraine's military still has them on its inventory.

So much for the warhead. The identification of the rocket carrying it depends upon an alleged paint match between two tiny, unidentifiable metal fragments recovered from the wreckage of MH17, and the paint on three larger pieces recovered from somewhere in the crash zone—an area of about 50km<sup>2</sup>—and being of a “shape and form ... consistent with a 9M38 series surface-to-air missile”. When, where and by whom these fragments were found is not mentioned. The report does, however, state that “It should be noted that many of the pieces of the wreckage were not examined by the Dutch Safety Board until four months after the crash”, that some parts of the crash zone were not accessible until 20 March 2015 (i.e. nine months after the fact, during which time a civil war raged across the area, destroying and contaminating evidence), when “pieces of wreckage that had been collected by local residents” were recovered. In any court of law, such ‘evidence’ would be inadmissible.

### Donetsk forces helped investigators

Western politicians, officials and news media have propagandised the notion that local militiamen were responsible for the long delays in accessing the crash zone, deliberately impeded the collection of debris, and looted victims' belongings and treated their bodies in a cavalier manner. But on 11 October, senior members of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) contingent attached to the investigation painted a very different picture. Interviewed by Paul McGeough, chief foreign correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, AFP Senior Sergeant Rod Anderson described the local efforts thus: “The [local] Ukrainians were not uncaring people. It was as much a tragedy for them as for the victims. There was a lot of talk of disrespect for the dead because of the fighting – that was not the case.”<sup>4</sup> Still referring to the Donetsk forces, he continued, “They were searching within 20 minutes of the crash and recovering remains – that’s a good response, a good job ... it was done fairly well ... with the level of expertise and equipment that they had, the locals did the best they could do.”

Detective Superintendent Andrew Donoghoe, head of the AFP team in the Netherlands, backed up his subordinate: “The victims were treated with respect and dignity in difficult circumstances.” Dr Simon Walsh, AFP chief forensic scientist and national head of disaster victim identification, confirmed that “there was no evidence to suggest otherwise.” While reportedly describing the local search effort as “amateurish”, Walsh said that “what we have established since is that so many victims were successfully identified on the basis of what [the Ukrainians] had collected, and subsequent searching did not reveal huge amounts of human remains that they had missed”, and he added that in many cases identification was aided by victims' jewellery—“clearly it had not been looted.” Asked by McGeough if “the locals and the rebels [were] as humane as the victims' families and friends might have

expected”, Walsh replied: “From what I’ve observed, that’s a fair assessment.”

It was then-Prime Minister of the DPR Alexander Borodai who delivered MH17's ‘black box’ data recorders, intact and unmolested, to Malaysian government representatives on 21 July 2014, four days after the crash. The refrigerated train carrying the victims' bodies departed Donetsk for Kharkiv, in Kiev-controlled territory, the same day, after local militia had repelled a Ukrainian Army assault on the area surrounding the city's train station. This fresh round of attacks by Kiev and the consequent resumption of hostilities, including in the crash zone, hampered and prolonged the international investigation for many months.

### What Russian ‘bullying’?

The other Great Lie promulgated by Western propagandists is that Russia is blocking attempts to investigate MH17, presumably to cover for its own or its allies' complicity in the disaster. Upon the DSB report's release, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull took the floor of Parliament to vow that Australia will continue to seek “justice” and “will not be bullied by Russia”, citing Russia's use of its UN Security Council veto on 29 July 2015 to block a resolution on setting up an international tribunal to prosecute those who downed MH17. In reality, as the Russian Embassy in Canberra truthfully recalled in a 14 October press release, Russia had co-initiated UNSC Resolution 2166, adopted 21 July 2014 (four days after the crash), which set forth requirements for the investigation and already demanded that “those responsible for this incident be held to account”. “Unfortunately”, the Embassy said, “Russia's proposal to use the UN Security Council mechanisms to organise a transparent investigation, as it is stipulated by the above-mentioned resolution, was ignored.”<sup>5</sup> It was only a full year later, when the direction of the coming JIT findings was already apparent and the five JIT member countries drafted the new resolution, for a tribunal, that Russia exercised its veto power to prevent the conduct of a witch-hunt under UN auspices.

The DSB's out-of-hand rejection of Russia's intelligence, technical data and expert analysis, while protecting much of the other information and material evidence from outside scrutiny, gives rise to “serious doubts whether the true purpose of the Dutch investigation is to establish the real causes of the air crash or justify the previously made accusations”, the release continued, pointing out that “Ukraine has failed to present to the international community the recording of a conversation of the military air traffic controllers as well as the information on the activities of Ukraine's air defence forces in the region of the crash.” The recording is important because MH17 crossed Ukraine north of its expected route, raising suspicions that it might have been guided over the combat zone deliberately, to provoke an incident. Outlandish as that might seem, such provocations—faked kidnappings to frame up an adversary, ‘false flag’ snipers, and more—had been a hallmark of the coup that brought the Kiev regime to power just five months earlier.

The DSB report did find Kiev responsible for failing to close the airspace over the eastern Ukraine war zone, thus putting MH17 and scores of other civilian flights in danger.

#### Footnotes:

1. <http://cdn.onderzoeksraad.nl/documents/report-mh17-crash-en.pdf>
2. <http://cdn.onderzoeksraad.nl/documents/appendix-x-nlr-report-en.pdf#page=50>
3. <https://www.rt.com/news/318531-mh17-experiment-almaz-antey/>
4. <http://www.smh.com.au/world/mh17-investigation-combines-horror-and-humanity-20151007-gk3izo>
5. <http://www.russianembassy-au.ru/en/news-information/102-on-the-mh17-air-disaster.html>