

RUSSIA TARGETED

# Malaysian Plane Downing Heightens War Danger

by Jeffrey Steinberg

July 22—While it may take days or even weeks to reach a competent forensic determination of the cause of the crash of the Malaysian commercial airliner MH17 over eastern Ukraine July 17, the cries for a confrontation with Russia are growing louder, led by President Obama and his top aides, including American UN Ambassador Samantha Power. As far as Obama and the U.S. establishment media are concerned, the byword is: “Don’t confuse me with facts—my mind is made up.” In this case, the determination is that Russian President Vladimir Putin was either directly or indirectly responsible for the incident, and Russia is to pay a heavy price.

Washington’s snap judgment was matched July 21 by British Prime Minister David Cameron, writing in the London *Times*, who declared Putin guilty of shooting down the airliner, and demanded that Europe break decisively with Russia.

While the war cry from London, Washington, and the Netherlands, in particular, continues, the United Nations Security Council on July 21 was able to agree on a resolution mandating an international, independent investigation of the jet crash. Among other points, the text demands that “the armed groups in control of the crash site and the surrounding area refrain from any actions that may compromise the integrity of the crash site and immediately provide safe, secure, full and unfettered access to the site and surrounding area for the appropriate investigating authorities.”

In fact, the OSCE (Organization for Security and

Cooperation in Europe) monitors declared on July 20 that they had been given full access to the main crash site. On July 21, before the UN resolution, Malaysian Prime Minister Najib Razak announced that he had reached an agreement with the prime minister of the self-declared Donetsk People’s Republic, whereby Malaysia would receive the remains of 282 people, which had been recovered and refrigerated by the militias, and would be given the two “black boxes” which the militias had taken custody of, in fear that they would be tampered with, if handed over to the Kiev authorities.

An official Pentagon statement—issued the same day as a phone call between U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov which appeared to agree on an impartial investigation—identified a Russian-made Buk/SA-11 missile as the weapon used in the downing, but offered no evidence as to who carried out the attack.

In contrast, the Russian Ministry of Defense on July 19 issued a statement, spelling out ten crucial unanswered questions, directed at Ukrainian authorities, over whose territory MH17 was flying at the time of the attack (see below).

On Sunday, July 20, Secretary of State Kerry appeared on a number of TV programs to bolster Obama’s own “blame Putin” rhetoric. Kerry’s appearance, reminiscent of Dr. Susan Rice’s now infamous TV appearances days after the Sept. 11, 2012 Benghazi attacks,



*Even before the smoke had cleared in the rubble from the downing of the Malaysian passenger airliner over eastern Ukraine (shown here on July 17), the British-U.S. warmongers were aiming their rhetorical guns at Russia.*

claiming they were the result of spontaneous demonstrations against an anti-Islam video, repeated the claims that the Russians had delivered SA-11 anti-aircraft batteries to rebels in eastern Ukraine and had trained them on the use of the sophisticated weapons. News leaks also claimed that CIA agents in Kiev had authenticated an alleged intercepted phone call between Ukrainian rebels and Russian military personnel right after the plane crash, taking credit for the incident.

### **‘A Doctor Strangelove Situation’**

Some sane voices in the U.S. and around the world have warned that the escalating rhetoric threatens to trigger a great powers war. Col. Patrick Lang (ret.), former head of the Defense Intelligence Agency’s human intelligence division, posted a blunt warning on his widely read website on July 19: “The Yellow Media are creating a Doctor Strangelove situation. They do not seem to grasp the idea that the war between Russia and the U.S.A. toward which they are groping will destroy both countries altogether. Once more, a war between the U.S.A. and Russia *will destroy both countries* and much of the rest of the world.”

The BRICS nations (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) leaders have all called for an “objective probe” of the Malaysian Airlines disaster in Ukraine that, if carried out, would help to avoid the war that

Lang is warning against. “I was shocked,” said Chinese President Xi Jinping at a joint press conference with Argentine President Cristina Fernández de Kirchner. “I hope that a fair and objective probe will be carried out to establish the truth as early as possible.”

In a separate statement, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he hopes “the circumstances of the disaster are established quickly.”

Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff has also urged a speedy investigation into the terrible tragedy. “First, it should be established what really happened. The Brazilian government will give no assessments until the circumstances are clear,” she said. Rousseff was echoed by South African President Jacob Zuma, who also called for a thorough, transparent, and independent investigation to determine the cause of the incident.

Greatly adding to the danger, is that the Malaysian plane tragedy does not take place in a vacuum. President Obama, just days before the crash, announced harsh new sanctions against Russia—despite the fact that the European Union did not go along with Washington and London’s demands. NATO has announced an expansion of maneuvers in the Baltic countries and Eastern Europe on the Russian borders.

What is completely missing from the Washington and London rhetoric is any effort to determine *cui bono*—who would benefit from such a brutal act of terrorism. From that standpoint, Russia stands to lose the most as the result of the tragedy.

Furthermore, the downing of the MH17 came at the conclusion of the world-changing BRICS Summit in Brazil, where the five nations agreed to establish a New Development Bank and a fund to protect against currency warfare (see this week’s *Feature*). These new institutions, while not formally replacing the IMF and World Bank, offer a clear alternative to the brutal conditionalities and debt blackmail of the “Washington consensus” system. They come at a time when even the Bank for International Settlements has been warning about an imminent debt blowout of the major trans-Atlantic banks as the result of their out-of-control gambling activities. In the second quarter of the year, derivatives contracts expanded by an annual rate of 19%,

with total global derivatives estimated at over \$1.7 *quadrillion*.

Mervyn King, the former head of the Bank of England, recently noted that the biggest financial crash of the 20th Century took place in the Spring-Summer of 1914, and led directly into the Guns of August start of World War I. The parallels between then and now, exactly 100 years later, are stark. The major difference is that the great powers of 1914 did not have overkill arsenals of thermonuclear weapons, as the United States, Russia, and China have today.

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## Documentation

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### Russian Defense Ministry: 10 Questions on MH17 Crash

July 19—The Russian Ministry of Defense today issued a list of ten questions to the Kiev authorities on the downing of Malaysian Airlines flight MH17. These were announced in a televised interview by Deputy Defense Minister Anatoli Antonov with Rossiya-24 state TV. As of yet, they have not been answered.

According to Itar-Tass, Antonov accused Kiev of inaction on forming an international commission to investigate the July 17 crash of the Malaysian Airlines flight. Antonov said that some people are “already today trying to determine who is guilty in this situation: Either we hear it is the Russian Federation or its Armed Forces, or militiamen in the southeast of Ukraine.” He added, “It seems to be a continuation of the information war unleashed against the Russian Federation already for many months, and we feel the consequences of the war.” The deputy defense minister addressed ten questions to Kiev, saying that answers to them “would allow all of us, not only in Russia, but in Western states and the East, in Asia, to try to find an answer to the main questions: What happened in the sky over Ukraine and what must be done to prevent it from recurring.”

The ten questions are:

“1. The Ukrainian authorities instantaneously determined who was to blame in the tragedy. Of course, in their opinion, it is the militias. What is the basis of these conclusions?

“2. Can official Kiev give all details related to the

use of Buk systems in the combat zone, and especially answer why these systems were deployed, given that the militias have no aircraft?

“3. What are the reasons for the inaction of the Ukrainian authorities on forming an international commission, and when will such a commission start to function? The international community wants to know.

“4. Are representatives of the Ukrainian Armed Forces prepared to submit to international experts’ documentation on the inventory of air-to-air and surface-to-air missiles installed on their anti-aircraft weapons? This is a very important question, which will help us determine what systems were used against the Malaysian Boeing.

“5. Will air control data be provided to the international commission on the movements of Ukrainian Air Force planes on the day of the tragedy?

“6. Why did Ukrainian air controllers allow the plane to deviate to the north, in the direction of the so-called anti-terrorist operation being conducted by official Kiev against the population of southeastern Ukraine.

“7. Why was the air space above the combat zone not completely closed to civilian aviation, especially since the region in question lacked a continuous field of radar navigation means? [This is a reference to the fact that the modern communications systems of Donetsk airport have been knocked out during fighting—ed.]

“8. Can official Kiev comment at this time on the report that appeared in social media, allegedly from a Spanish-national air traffic controller working in Ukraine, that the Boeing that was shot down was under escort by two Ukrainian military aircraft?

“9. Why has the SBU [Security Service of Ukraine] begun to work with the recordings of communications between air traffic control and the Boeing crew and with Ukrainian radar data, without the involvement of international representatives?

“10. In what way have the lessons of the previous, similar tragedy, the case of the Russian Tu-154 over the Black Sea, been taken into account? [This was the October 2001 crash of Tel Aviv-Novosibirsk flight of Sibir Airlines, which was downed by a Ukrainian missile during training, killing 78 people—ed.] In that case, the Ukrainian leadership denied, until the last minute, any role of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in that tragedy—until we presented incontrovertible evidence and proved who was the real culprit in that tragedy.”