

June 11, 2018

Dear Mr. Van der Werff,

I am writing this letter to you in my personal capacity, since I am not formally authorized to express my country's official position regarding the MH-17 flight crash. Nevertheless, my experience and my knowledge allow me to draw certain conclusions and share observations about what is happening in the investigation of this terrible catastrophe now.

We in Russia are not afraid of criticism, moreover, we welcome it if it is constructive. I agree with your remark that from the communication management point of view we could have done better, especially in the initial stages. We have been simply not ready to defend ourselves against such blatant and unfounded accusations heaped against us. In addition, we trusted the Dutch partners and believed in their objectivity. It looks like it was a mistake.

In accordance with Security Council Resolution 2166, Russia have been at the cradle of which, we were most involved in the cooperation with Dutch experts and investigators. We declassified and handed over to the investigation team the technical and design data of the Buk missiles, the manufacturer of these weapons, Almaz-Antey, conducted a scientific experiment, the data of which were also provided to the investigators.

Unfortunately, these materials have neither been taken into account in the final report of the Dutch Security Council, nor in the interim results of the criminal investigation released by the Joint Investigative Team (JIT). Nor did the reports include the primary radar data transmitted by us to the Dutch party, which completely exclude the possibility of launching a missile from a territory controlled by the militia. In short, the Dutch investigators and the JIT took into account only what confirmed the initially harped in the West version instigated by Ukraine of either Russian involvement in the incident or that of the defenders of Donbass. All other evidence was ignored, and many of the documents and materials most important for objective investigation, apparently, were not even inquired from the Ukrainian side.

Moreover, the JIT, the activities of which Russia is not involved in, released the interim results of the investigation without waiting for our response to two requests for legal assistance being processed by the Prosecutor General's Office of Russia. This indicates the reluctance to consider any of the materials that we provide. At the same time, as far as we can judge, materials of the Bellingcat, a research group having extremely contradictory reputation that primarily uses social media materials and do not hide their antipathy towards Russia, were attached to the case. Everything that is happening today around the investigation of the catastrophe suggests that

all the conclusions were made even before the investigation is completed and the "facts" are simply adjusted to it.

Is it possible, under these circumstances, to recognize the published JIT data as objective and reliable? Is it possible to talk about a thorough, impartial and transparent investigation? Unfortunately, such steps only further convince us that in case of MH-17 we face yet another Western provocation against Russia, similar to, for example, the "Skrypal case" when we were also labelled as criminals without any credible evidence. The parallels with the "investigations" of alleged incidents involving the use of chemical weapons in Syria, the key element of which were fake videos of the NGO "White Helmets", suggest themselves.

Therefore, we can not fully trust the results of the JIT investigation released in May. We insist on proper consideration of the materials allocated by us. Taking into account the circumstances mentioned by me above, we will have to consider how to act further and to counter this malicious PR campaign. Perhaps we really have to stop counting on the investigation of the JIT, but rather to present our coherent, logical version of what happened, as you have suggested in your letter. This is to be decided by my colleagues in Moscow.

In any case, we will not allow anyone to talk to Russia in terms of ultimatums both regarding the MH-17 investigation and the "Skripal case".

I personally have no doubt that the "MH-17 case" has turned just into another reason for the demonization of Russia in hands of unscrupulous PR guys. It is especially unfortunate that the relatives of those killed in this tragedy, those who are trying to get the truth about its causes are the hostages of this situation. This is unacceptable and immoral. The actions of the JIT and "Bellingcat" do not bring us closer to the truth, but, on the contrary, defer us from it.

I am not aware of any cases of disregard for the memory of the victims of the catastrophe on the part of Russia you mention, we took it very gravely and still experience it as our own sorrow. We know firsthand the pain of such losses - unfortunately, Russian aircrafts have also repeatedly become victims of terrorist acts and incidents. One of them, by the way, was mistakenly shot down by Ukraine in October 2001.

In conclusion, I would like to assure you that Russia is ready to continue searching for truth alongside with all those who are interested in it and are not biased in favor of some unconfirmed point of view. We are grateful to you and other bloggers conducting unpoliticized, factual investigations.

I am sure that thanks to all these efforts, truth will eventually triumph.

Yours faithfully,

Dmitry Polyansky