

# What Did US Spy Satellites See in Ukraine?

**Exclusive:** The U.S. media's Ukraine bias has been obvious, siding with the Kiev regime and bashing ethnic Russian rebels and Russia's President Putin. But now with the scramble to blame Putin for the Malaysia Airlines shoot-down the shoddy journalism has grown truly dangerous, says Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

In the heat of the U.S. media's latest war hysteria rushing to pin blame for the crash of a Malaysia Airlines passenger jet on Russia's President Vladimir Putin there is the same absence of professional skepticism that has marked similar stampedes on Iraq, Syria and elsewhere with key questions not being asked or answered.

The dog-not-barking question on the catastrophe over Ukraine is: what did the U.S. surveillance satellite imagery show? It's hard to believe that with the attention that U.S. intelligence has concentrated on eastern Ukraine for the past half year that the alleged trucking of several large Buk anti-aircraft missile systems from Russia to Ukraine and then back to Russia didn't show up somewhere.

Yes, there are limitations to what U.S. spy satellites can see. But the Buk missiles are about 16 feet long and they are usually mounted on trucks or tanks. Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 also went down during the afternoon, not at night, meaning the missile battery was not concealed by darkness.

So why hasn't this question of U.S. spy-in-the-sky photos and what they reveal been pressed by the major U.S. news media? How can the Washington Post run front-page stories, such as the one on Sunday with the definitive title "U.S. official: Russia gave systems," without demanding from these U.S. officials details about what the U.S. satellite images disclose?

Instead, the Post's Michael Birnbaum and Karen DeYoung wrote from Kiev: "The United States has confirmed that Russia supplied sophisticated missile launchers to separatists in eastern Ukraine and that attempts were made to move them back across the Russian border after the Thursday shoot-down of a Malaysian jetliner, a U.S. official said Saturday.

"'We do believe they were trying to move back into Russia at least three Buk [missile launch] systems,' the official said. U.S. intelligence was 'starting to get indications a little more than a week ago' that the Russian launchers had been moved into Ukraine, said the official" whose identity was withheld by the

Post so the official would discuss intelligence matters.

But catch the curious vagueness of the official's wording: "we do believe"; "starting to get indications." Are we supposed to believe and perhaps more relevant, do the Washington Post writers actually believe that the U.S. government with the world's premier intelligence services can't track three lumbering trucks each carrying large mid-range missiles?

What I've been told by one source, who has provided accurate information on similar matters in the past, is that U.S. intelligence agencies do have detailed satellite images of the likely missile battery that launched the fateful missile, but the battery appears to have been under the control of Ukrainian government troops dressed in what look like Ukrainian uniforms.

The source said CIA analysts were still not ruling out the possibility that the troops were actually eastern Ukrainian rebels in similar uniforms but the initial assessment was that the troops were Ukrainian soldiers. There also was the suggestion that the soldiers involved were undisciplined and possibly drunk, since the imagery showed what looked like beer bottles scattered around the site, the source said.

Instead of pressing for these kinds of details, the U.S. mainstream press has simply passed on the propaganda coming from the Ukrainian government and the U.S. State Department, including hyping the fact that the Buk system is "Russian-made," a rather meaningless fact that gets endlessly repeated.

However, to use the "Russian-made" point to suggest that the Russians must have been involved in the shoot-down is misleading at best and clearly designed to influence ill-informed Americans. As the Post and other news outlets surely know, the Ukrainian military also operates Russian-made military systems, including Buk anti-aircraft batteries, so the manufacturing origin has no probative value here.

### **Relying on the Ukraine Regime**

Much of the rest of the known case against Russia comes from claims made by the Ukrainian regime, which emerged from the unconstitutional coup d'etat against elected President Viktor Yanukovich on Feb. 22. His overthrow followed months of mass protests, but the actual coup was spearheaded by neo-Nazi militias that overran government buildings and forced Yanukovich's officials to flee.

In recognition of the key role played by the neo-Nazis, who are ideological descendants of Ukrainian militias that collaborated with the Nazi SS in World War II, the new regime gave these far-right nationalists control of several ministries, including the office of national security which is under the command

of longtime neo-Nazi activist Andriy Parubiy. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Ukraine, Through the US Looking Glass.](#)"]

It was this same Parubiy whom the Post writers turned to seeking more information condemning the eastern Ukrainian rebels and the Russians regarding the Malaysia Airlines catastrophe. Parubiy accused the rebels in the vicinity of the crash site of destroying evidence and conducting a cover-up, another theme that resonated through the MSM.

Without bothering to inform readers of Parubiy's unsavory neo-Nazi background, the Post quoted him as a reliable witness declaring: "It will be hard to conduct a full investigation with some of the objects being taken away, but we will do our best."

In contrast to Parubiy's assurances, the Kiev regime actually has a terrible record of telling the truth or pursuing serious investigations of human rights crimes. Still left open are questions about the identity of snipers who on Feb. 20 fired on both police and protesters at the Maidan, touching off the violent escalation that led to Yanukovich's ouster. Also, the Kiev regime has failed to ascertain the facts about the death-by-fire of scores of ethnic Russians in the Trade Union Building in Odessa on May 2. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[Burning Ukraine's Protesters Alive.](#)"]

The Kiev regime also duped the New York Times (and apparently the U.S. State Department) when it disseminated photos that supposedly showed Russian military personnel inside Russia and then later inside Ukraine. After the State Department endorsed the "evidence," the Times led its newspaper with this story on April 21, but it turned out that one of the key photos supposedly shot in Russia was actually taken in Ukraine, destroying the premise of the story. [See Consortiumnews.com's "[NYT Retracts Ukraine Photo Scoop.](#)"]

But here we are yet again with the MSM relying on unverified claims being made by the Kiev regime about something as sensitive as whether Russia provided sophisticated anti-aircraft missiles capable of shooting down high-flying civilian aircraft to poorly trained eastern Ukrainian rebels.

This charge is so serious that it could propel the world into a second Cold War and conceivably if there are more such miscalculations into a nuclear confrontation. These moments call for the utmost in journalistic professionalism, especially skepticism toward propaganda from biased parties.

Yet, what Americans have seen again is the major U.S. news outlets, led by the Washington Post and the New York Times, publishing the most inflammatory of articles based largely on unreliable Ukrainian officials and on the U.S. State

Department which was a principal instigator of the Ukraine crisis.

In the recent past, this sort of sloppy American journalism has led to mass slaughters in Iraq and has contributed to near U.S. wars on Syria and Iran but now the stakes are much higher. As much fun as it is to heap contempt on a variety of “designated villains,” such as Saddam Hussein, Bashar al-Assad, Ali Khamenei and now Vladimir Putin, this sort of recklessness is careening the world toward a very dangerous moment, conceivably its last.

**Investigative reporter Robert Parry broke many of the Iran-Contra stories for The Associated Press and Newsweek in the 1980s. You can buy his new book, *America’s Stolen Narrative*, either in [print here](#) or as an e-book (from [Amazon](#) and [barnesandnoble.com](#)). For a limited time, you also can order Robert Parry’s trilogy on the Bush Family and its connections to various right-wing operatives for only \$34. The trilogy includes *America’s Stolen Narrative*. For details on this offer, [click here](#).**

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