

The Mystery of a Ukrainian Army 'Defector'

Exclusive: U.S. intelligence officials suggest that the person who fired the missile that downed Malaysia Airlines Flight 17 may have been "a defector" from the Ukrainian army, an apparent attempt to explain why some CIA analysts thought satellite images revealed men in Ukrainian army uniforms manning the missile battery, writes Robert Parry.

By Robert Parry

As the U.S. government seeks to build its case blaming eastern Ukrainian rebels and Russia for the shoot-down of Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, the evidence seems to be getting twisted to fit the preordained conclusion, including a curious explanation for why the troops suspected of firing the fateful missile may have been wearing Ukrainian army uniforms.

On Tuesday, mainstream journalists, including for the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post, were given a briefing about the U.S. intelligence information that supposedly points the finger of blame at the rebels and Russia. While much of this circumstantial case was derived from postings on "social media," the briefings also addressed the key issue of who fired the Buk anti-aircraft missile that is believed to have downed the airliner killing all 298 people onboard.

After last Thursday's shoot-down, I was told that U.S. intelligence analysts were examining satellite imagery that showed the crew manning the suspected missile battery wearing what looked like Ukrainian army uniforms, but my source said the analysts were still struggling with whether that essentially destroyed the U.S. government's case blaming the rebels.

The Los Angeles Times article on Tuesday's briefing seemed to address the same information this way: "U.S. intelligence agencies have so far been unable to determine the nationalities or identities of the crew that launched the missile. U.S. officials said it was possible the SA-11 [anti-aircraft missile] was launched by a defector from the Ukrainian military who was trained to use similar missile systems."

That statement about a possible "defector" might explain why some analysts thought they saw soldiers in Ukrainian army uniforms tending to the missile battery in eastern Ukraine. But there is another obvious explanation that the U.S. intelligence community seems unwilling to accept: that the missile may have been launched by someone working for the Ukrainian military.

In other words, we may be seeing another case of the U.S. government “fixing the intelligence” around a desired policy outcome, as occurred in the run-up to war with Iraq.

The Los Angeles Times also reported: “U.S. officials have not released evidence proving that Russia’s military played a direct role in the downing of the jet or in training separatists to use the SA-11 missile system. But they said Tuesday that the Russian military has been training Ukrainian separatists to operate anti-aircraft batteries at a base in southwestern Russia.”

Though that last charge also has lacked verifiable proof and could refer to training on less powerful anti-aircraft weapons like so-called Manpads the key question is whether the Russian government trained the rebels in handling a sophisticated anti-aircraft system, like the SA-11, and then was reckless enough to supply one or more of those missile batteries to the rebels – knowing that these rockets could reach above 30,000 feet where passenger airlines travel.

The Russian government has denied doing anything that dangerous, if not crazy, and the eastern Ukrainian rebels also deny ever possessing such a missile battery. But the question that needs answering is: Are the Russians and the rebels lying?

That requires a serious and impartial investigation, but what the Obama administration and most of the mainstream U.S. news media have delivered so far is another example of “information warfare,” assembling a case to make an adversary look bad regardless of the actual evidence – and then marginalizing any dissents to the desired conclusion.

That was exactly the “group think” that led the United States into the disastrous invasion of Iraq and it appears that few if any lesson were learned.

[For more on this topic of prejudging who’s to blame for the Malaysia Airlines tragedy, see Consortiumnews.com’s [“Kerry’s Latest Reckless Rush to Judgment.”](#)]

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](#).
