

# MH17 CRASH FEW FACTS YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW



**THE PLANE**  
A Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777-200ER, which the carrier said was carrying 283 passengers, including three infants, and 15 crew members on Flight MH17 from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. After leaving Amsterdam at 12:15pm local time, the aircraft was due to land at Kuala Lumpur International Airport at 6:10am local time the following day.



**THE ROUTE**  
Though Ukrainian military aircraft have been shot down over eastern Ukraine by rebels, and the area has been the scene of fierce fighting, the route taken by the Malaysian jet appears to have been subject to no flight restrictions, the International Air Transport Association, an industry group, said. The plane apparently was flying at approximately 10,000 meters (33,000 feet), which was authorised, although Ukrainian authorities had closed the airspace at lower altitudes.

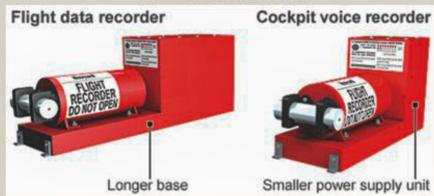
**THE CRASH**  
Ukrainian authorities reported the crash, and an Associated Press journalist found the site near a village held by pro-Russia fighters 40 kilometers from the Russia border. The reporter said the aircraft appeared to have broken up before impact. Burning wreckage and the belongings of passengers were strewn over a wide area.

**THE CAUSE**  
An adviser to Ukraine's interior minister said the plane was shot down with a missile, but gave no proof. In a counterclaim, a pro-Moscow separatist leader said he was certain that it was Ukrainian troops who downed the airliner, but also offered no explanation or proof. Independent Western defense experts told the AP that both Ukrainian and Russian armed forces possess SA-17 missile launchers capable of reaching an altitude of 20,000 meters, and that pro-Moscow insurgents may have gotten their hands on one to two surface-to-air missiles when Ukrainian forces retreated.

**BUK SURFACE-TO-AIR MISSILE SYSTEM**  
**Weapons:** Four surface-to-air missiles  
**Missile speed (max):** Mach 3  
**Target altitude (max):** 22,000 metres



## WHAT ABOUT THE PLANE'S BLACK BOXES?



As international investigators scramble to gain access to the crash site, rescue workers say they have recovered one of the plane's "black box" flight recorders after searching through debris. Pro-Russian separatists in the region are also said to have discovered the second black box. The recorders - actually coloured a deep orange to aid discovery - store key technical information about the flight as well as conversations undertaken in the cockpit.

**THE PASSENGERS**  
At least 189 people on the flight were Dutch citizens. There were also 44 Malaysians, including all 15 crew on board, 27 Australians, and 12 Indonesians. Other nationalities so far identified were 9 passengers from the United Kingdom, four from Germany, four Belgians, three from the Philippines, one from New Zealand and one Canadian. 4 bodies are still unverified.

**WHO WILL INVESTIGATE?**  
The Ukrainian government had initiated an investigation and had invited Malaysia to participate, Malaysia's Transport Minister Liow Tiong Lai confirmed yesterday. Sixty-two officials from Malaysia are travelling to Kiev. But Malaysian authorities also called for an additional independent international investigation to be conducted. The Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe yesterday said that representatives of separatist groups had agreed to provide safe access to the crash site for rescue teams, as well as national and international investigators and monitors. Separatists are also co-operating with Ukrainian authorities in the course of the rescue operation, it added.



**THE REACTION**  
President Obama, who was informed by Russian President Vladimir Putin during a phone call of reports of a downed passenger jet, asked that his advisers keep him updated. Boeing offered any assistance that authorities might request. Eurocontrol said Ukrainian authorities informed it that all air space in Eastern Ukraine has now been closed, and that any flight plans filed using these routes will be rejected by Eurocontrol until further notice.



## HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN GAZA

From left clockwise, A Palestinian man holds his daughters, Shada and Lama al-Ejla, who were injured in an Israeli tank attack, as he leaves a hospital in Gaza City; An Israeli missile hits Palestinian buildings in Gaza City; An Israeli army US made self-propelled howitzer 155m cannon fires a shell from the Israel-Gaza border into the Gaza. Israel warned it could broaden a Gaza ground assault as it stepped up attacks that have killed more than 285 Palestinians.



PHOTO: AFP

# Plane tragedy could be Ukraine game changer

AFP, Paris

The apparent downing of a Malaysian passenger jet and the loss of nearly 300 lives could be a game changer in the Ukraine crisis, piling pressure on key players, Russia foremost.

The shock tragedy, which President Barack Obama described as a "wake-up call" for Europe on Russia, has brought painful proximity to a conflict which for many was until Thursday a faraway and localised standoff.

"After the crash of the Amsterdam-Kuala Lumpur flight in the region of Donbass, the conflict will probably appear less distant to the people of Europe," said German analyst Holger Schmieding.

The crash claimed the lives of 298 people who had no relationship to Ukraine or Russia.

Obama said the plane was downed by a surface-to-air missile shot from territory held by pro-Russian separatists.

Analysts say it has forced Europeans to see the Ukraine conflict as a threat to the greater region - and that they could ratchet up pressure on Moscow.

Lack of tangible action from Russia, says Chris Weafer of the economic consultancy group Macro Advisory in Moscow, could push

the West to bring Stage 3 sanctions - which could affect core economic relations and was unlike before the tragedy.

These include the financial activities of Russian oligarchs in London's financial markets, a Mistral warship deal between France and Russia worth \$1.6 billion and substantial investment by German firms in Russia.

Many are hoping that this will push both sides towards a meaningful dialogue.

"It is simply impossible to know what Putin's long-term intentions are toward eastern Ukraine," said the Carnegie Europe think-tank in a blog. "If, as many fear, Putin intends to spread instability and provoke his Ukrainian counterpart, Petro Poroshenko, into going on the offensive in the region, then the casualties and refugees will increase. The losers will be many." It said the "only glimmer of hope from the terrible plane crash is that it just might be a catalyst for serious negotiations."

In Kiev, independent political analyst Volodymyr Fessenko said the disaster could actually be counter-productive as "it will impact on public opinion in Ukraine and make any negotiations with the separatists impossible in the future."

## PAST PASSENGER PLANE TRAGEDIES

### Siberian Airlines Flight 1812, Oct 2001

A Siberian Airlines plane was heading to Novosibirsk, Russia from Tel Aviv, Israel when it was shot down and crashed into the Black Sea on 4 October, 2001. All 78 passengers onboard were killed. The Ukrainian military denied its involvement at first. However, Ukrainian officials later admitted that its military had mistakenly shot the plane during a training exercise.

### Iran Air Flight 655, July 1988

An Iran Air Airbus A300, which was bound for Dubai, was shot down in airspace above the Gulf on 3 July, 1988. The plane was mistaken for an F-14 fighter plane that had been sold to Iran before the 1979 revolution. An American cruiser, USS Vincennes launched two missiles at the plane, downing it and killing all 290 passengers and crew onboard. The American government later compensated the families of victims.

### Korean Airlines Flight 007, Sept 1983

A Korean Airlines passenger jet, which was travelling to Seoul, South Korea from New York, was shot down by a Soviet fighter plane on 1 September, 1983, killing all 269 passengers and crew on board. The plane was shot when it veered off-course and strayed into Soviet territory. Soviet initially denied knowledge of the incident but later admitted the country's role, claiming that the aircraft had been on a spy mission.

### Cathay Pacific Airways C-54, July 1954

On 23 July 1954 a Cathay Pacific C-54 Skymaster carrying 19 passengers and crew was flying from Bangkok to Hong Kong when it was shot down by a mainland Chinese Army fighter plane off the coast of Hainan Island. Ten people died. China said it had mistaken the plane for a military aircraft on an attack mission.



# First Mandela Day celebrated

AFP, Johannesburg

People around the world yesterday celebrated "Mandela Day" for the first time since the iconic South African leader's death by doing good deeds on what would have been his 96th birthday.

For the past five years millions have volunteered 67 minutes of their time on July 18 for the common good to mark Nelson Mandela's 67 years of activism for South Africa's freedom.

Mandela died on December 5 last year aged 95 after a lengthy illness. Tens of thousands of mourners, including world leaders, attended memorial services leading up to his funeral.

The call to do good deeds in his name started in Johannesburg and New York in 2009, and has expanded to 126 countries this year.

For the first Mandela Day after his death, events were planned in Paris, New York, Dallas, London, Edinburgh and Glasgow, while a film portraying his life was to premiere in China.

In South Africa itself, suggested tasks for citizens ranged from cleaning a school to adopting a penguin. Newspapers have also weighed in with suggestions to volunteer in orphanages, donate books to schools or blankets to the homeless, or even to sterilise stray cats.

Among the international tributes, Google honoured Mandela through

its famous logo, while in Glasgow his granddaughter Tukwini Mandela was the guest of honor at a ceremony in memory of her grandfather.

Mandela spent 27 years in prison during his struggle against white-minority rule, but forgave his former oppressors when the apartheid regime ended with free elections in 1994. His actions to reconcile his country's divided people earned him global respect and the Nobel Peace prize.

"His extraordinary compassion after 27 years in prison showed that human rights and equality are stronger than discrimination and hate," said United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon earlier this week.

## Was Putin the target? Russia airs conspiracy theories

AFP, Moscow

Russia's state-controlled television yesterday wheeled out conspiracy theories to explain the Malaysian air crash including one holding that it was a bungled attempt to down President Vladimir Putin's presidential jet.

After Putin said that Ukraine was responsible for the crash, Russian state television focused on several theories that pinned the blame accordingly.

"The aim could have been Plane No. 1," Russia 24 television said, referring to Putin's presidential jet, quoting an Interfax civil aviation source as saying the logo on the Malaysian plane's wing "looks like the Russian tricolour."

To back up the claim, it aired television footage of a hawkishly pro-Nato former Ukraine defence minister, Anatolii Grytsenko, saying someone should kill Putin. The president returned to Moscow on Thursday from a tour of Latin America, and his plane and the Malaysian liner both flew over eastern Europe at roughly the same time, Channel One television noted.

Casting doubt on Ukraine's suggestion that the rebels were behind the crash, Channel One stressed that the Kiev authorities "fully control the situation in the air."

It also suggested that Ukraine's announcement of a terrorist attack came suspiciously soon after the event.



## Berlusconi given new life in Italy

Court acquits him  
in sex case trial

AFP, Milan

An Italian appeals court yesterday cleared Silvio Berlusconi of having sex with an underage prostitute and abuse of power in a surprise ruling that will strengthen the former prime minister on the political scene.

This effectively scraps Berlusconi's seven-year sentence and lifelong ban from holding public office. The judge said there was "no crime" on the flamboyant politicians part.

Prosecutors had asked the judges to uphold the suspended sentence against Berlusconi for paying for sex with an exotic dancer called Ruby who was underage at that time. Berlusconi had also been convicted of pressuring the cops while he was still PM to release Ruby from custody when she was arrested for theft.

## NEWS IN brief

### Iran nuke deadline extension 'likely' today

AFP, Vienna

Iran and world powers are "likely" to agree today on the terms of extending a Sunday deadline to reach a nuclear deal, China's chief negotiator in talks in Vienna said. "Yes, it is likely," Wang Qun told reporters, adding however that Iran and the five permanent members of the UN Security Council Germany were still "discussing" how long the extension would be and other issues.

### Iraqi president to return from exile

AFP, Sulaimaniyah

Iraqi President Jalal Talabani was to return from months of treatment abroad, with his crisis-hit country on the brink of breakup but his native Kurdistan buoyant with statehood hopes. "President Talabani is coming home on Saturday July 19 after receiving successful health treatment in brotherly Germany," his Patriotic Union of Kurdistan said on Friday. While most of Iraq's political power lies with the prime minister's office, the 80-year-old Talabani was long seen as a key mediator between Iraq's feuding factions.

### Yingluck vows not to flee country

AFP, Bangkok

Thailand's deposed former prime minister Yingluck Shinawatra yesterday ruled out going into self-exile to avoid possible criminal charges, after the country's junta gave her permission to travel overseas. In her first news conference since the army seized power in May, Yingluck said she would fly to Paris for a "private trip". She is expected to attend the 65th birthday party of her elder brother, the fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawatra, on July 26.

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