Problems of the MH17 track-a-trail narrative
The images, videos, postings and intercepts

This review is under permanent construction

Last update: September 2019
Important sources

[Gr] Arnold Greidanus – What you see is all there is; Re-examining the Oplot convoy, the Vostok convoy and the alleged Buk convoy on July 17th 2014

http://www.whathappenedtoflightmh17.com/what-you-see-is-all-there-is/

[Update 20.11.2016]: Arnold has withdrawn his report until further notice. Reason is a new post from Bellingcat’s Aric Toler with a message on Vkontakte site “Donetsk is Ukraine!”, purportedly showing a 15 minute 17 July 2014 sighting of the Buk in Makiivka and Donetsk. By the way, also this message will return in this problems list. Below a copy of Arnold's report as saved by webarchive service Wayback Machine].

https://web.archive.org/web/20151117033913/http://www.whathappenedtoflightmh17.com/what-you-see-is-all-there-is/

[Ke] Kemet, administrator of Russian MH17 discussion forum, examining photo’s and footage


[Ko1] Micha Kobs – Bellingcat the launch site: recherche zur recherche

https://www.scribd.com/doc/267001590/Bellingcat-the-Launch-Site

[Ko2] Micha Kobs – Haunt the Buk


[Ma1] Sergey Mastepanov – MH17: An examination of the social media evidence

http://energia.su/mh17/

[Ma2] Sergey Mastepanov – The Buk videos are fake

http://energia.su/mh17/buk_vids/fake_buk_vids.html

[We1] Max van der Werff – Lying for justice

http://kremlintroll.nl/?p=605
[We2] Max van der Werff – 1000 days
https://maxfromthewharf.com/mh17-1000-days/

[Ro] Akash Rosen – Digital Forensic Reporting; MH17 Video and audio forensic analysis
https://www.dropbox.com/s/o3s03aqzz1g4pm3/Project-MH17-DigitalForensicsReporting-FinalV1.0-260519-Legal-Updated.pdf?dl=0

[Wo] Gabriele Wolff – Ukraine, Informazionskrieg um MH17
https://gabrielewolff.wordpress.com/2015/10/10/ukraine-informationskrieg-um-mh17-6/

[Be] Official endorsed story: Bellingcat – The origin of the separatist Buk

[OM] Prosecutors website with the preliminary results of the investigation
https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-vliegramp/presentaties/presentation-joint/

Abbreviations:
ADMS – Air Defense Missile System
AP – Associated Press
DSB – Dutch Safety Board, investigating safety issues
EEST – Eastern European Standard Time
JIT – Joint Investigation Team
OM – Openbaar Ministerie, the prosecutor
SAM – Surface-to-Air Missile
SBU – Ukrainian secret service
VK.com – VKontakte, Russian Facebook
I. Problems of the photos and videos

Site: Donetsk (48.002375° 37.855124°)
Source: Anonymous “freelance photographer”.
First known publication: Paris Match magazine, 23 july (large Buk in small format), 25 july (cropped Buk, large format)

Image – a handycam still – published by Paris Match in small format on 23 July 2014. The other version, which was published on the 25th, received all the attention.

Salient details:
• Two stills from the handycam video were published 8 days after the crash, not the entire video (see next item in this list);
• First location was said by the freelancer and Paris Match to be Snizhne. It appeared to be
Donetsk after blogger/influencer [Ukraine@war](https://www.ukraineatwar.org) revised the site of capture [1].

- Sourcing: at first this seemed one of only few (three) existing cases of first hand accounts conveyed by journalists, however anonymously, though the alleged “freelance photo-journalist” has been into contact with Bellingcat. Later on, the story happened to be quite different.

On 1 July 2017, Dutch news program [**Nieuwsuur**](https://www.nieuwsuur.nl) broadcasted an interview ([2]) with the French photographer Capucine Granier-Deferre. This showed that this photographer only HAD SEEN the recordings – on 17 July, as she claims - and probably received the stills later.

According to the voice-over: "The video maker doesn't know what he just has seen and walks into the Ramada Hotel". There he found the small group of French journalists: Alfred de Montesquoi, Jerome Sessini and Capucine Granier-Deferre. Deferre: "I didn't pay much attention to it at first. He showed it and said: Look, there are huge rockets there. We were about to leave so I didn't do anything with it."

In the interview she gets all room for correcting the mistakes made at first. Deferre’s testimony reads as if she lists a series of official statements: "This was on the morning of the 17th. The video was filmed in Donetsk. But on that moment I didn't give it any attention. The photo in Paris Match was a still from this video on which one could see the Buk-missiles in the morning of the 17th in Donetsk."

**Problems:**

- Official time of capture changed a few times to fit a suggested timeline of the Buk trail when confronted with new evidence. According to the photographer it was 10:00 AM. Bellingcat first claimed 9 AM, then 11 AM, but revised it later on to 10:45 AM. Blogger Ukraine-at-war calculated to 10:05 AM. Most probable assessment was made by Michael Kobs, who set it on 11:05-15 AM [Ko2, p.45].

![Buk missile truck](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*According to a shadowcasting analysis Micha Kobs arrives at a time of capture of about 11:05 AM.*
The stills show indications of fakery, but possibly the truck with low-loader was there on the 17th. See Haunt the Buk report [Ko2] by Micha Kobs and Paris NO Match by Sergey Mastepeanov [3] for details.

Clues are: The shadows contradict the object; There are clues for digital alterations. The Buk is positioned in a strange way on the low-loader (see [Ko2, p.75-77] and [4] and [5];

[2] http://www.nos.nl/uitzending/25862-nieuwsuur.html see from min. 11:00
[5] https://twitter.com/masamikuramoto/status/735052849537765376
Site: Donetsk (48.002375° 37.855124°)
Source: JIT, Anonymous provider
URL: https://www.politie.nl/binaries/content/assets/politie/mh17/vid_20140717_102354.mp4
First known publication: 28 September 2016

Salient details:
- The entire handycam video from which the Paris Match stills were extracted, was released on the website of the Dutch police after the JIT presser showing preliminary results of their investigations into weapon and launch site. JIT re-encoded the video before publication.
- The video does not have any relevant metadata, but the file name, if original, gives a precise (but unconfirmed) timestamp. The filename is "vid_20140717_102354.mp4", so the video was supposedly shot at 10:23am."
- The stills that were extracted from this video and handed over to Paris Match, were a cropped part of the upper-right side of the video frame, exactly as Micha Kobs had analyzed.
- Apparently, the Toyota RA V4, standing idle on the road with door open in front of the parked truck with Buk, was not part of the transport in Donetsk. JIT shows in an animation only a Jeep UAZ and a black Van were escorting the truck. [6]. In Makiivka the transport comprised of 5 escorting cars (video) or 2, maybe 3 (satellite image). See below in the list.

Problems:
- The video does not stop to show the same problems that Micha Kobs brought forward for the Paris Match stills – the time issue (shadows point to 11:05, not 10:23), the issue of the incorrect shadows (seem to belong to another load) and the issue of the blurred/sharp divisions.
- When the Buk is approached, the frame rate per second of the video drops to 15 fps. The Buk itself seems never to escape blur, initially cast over the entire view. Many frames show sharp parts next to blurred parts. On a few frames the bird-droppings on the windowshield of the car with handycam are sharp as is the white truck. At the same time the Buk part is blurred.
- Buk vehicle side-skirt comparison, the technique Bellingcat used to show this Buk matched a Buk from the Russian Kursk brigade, would entail constructing a “pixel salat”, as Kobs dubbed it. The above mentioned issues and other features resulting from the bad quality of this footage render the video useless for forensic comparison with known Buks.

[6] See animation 3, from 3:00 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf6gJ8NDhYA
Areas of interest:
1. White circle: site where fingerprint marker, an unspoked Buk wheel, is blocked by the van [7];
2. Blue circle: unfolded netting. Folds are seen on the photo and video of the alleged Buk transport in Torez (see also “The Torez video”);
3. Red circle: white markings as seen on Buk 3-2 in the Kursk convoy too, used for “fingerprinting analysis” by the JIT; the lowest marker would show the text “H 2200” [7].
Salient details:

• The photo delivers an unnatural, cropped view on the situation depicted;

• There are no people (so also no suspected transporters of the Buk) visible on this image;

• The JIT used this image for their “fingerprinting analysis”, comparing some visual markings with markings on a Buk from the Russian Kursk Brigade [7].

• The Van exactly blocks the most important feature that is used for comparison with this Russian Buk, which is: the second wheel on the left at the right side of the Buk Telar. This has to be a so-called hollow or unspoked wheel, whereas all other wheels of the Telar would be spoken.

• The site where the picture is taken is exactly the same as the site from all other accounts of Buk presence in Donetsk, apart from the Paris Match images, which is the crossroads of Ilycha Avenue and Shaktostrotelei Avenue (see also Part II in this report).

Problems:

• Source of the image is unknown;

• Timestamp is unknown.

[7] For the JIT fingerprinting analysis, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oE9jVyesRcw
Still of the Makiivka video showing digital artefacts when the Buk drives beneath a tree and is covered by its shadow. Instead of a Buk top we see trees. It shows the low quality of the video with respect to its resolution.

Salient details:

- The video appeared on YouTube only 22 months after the crash, on the same day a BBC MH17 documentary was broadcasted featuring Buk sighting tweeter @WowihaY with a remarkable statement (see images below; for his Buk sighting, see part II of this report).

- Bad quality with respect to resolution; many markers that could verify the Buk are invisible; retouche software has been used [8].

- Truck with Buk was allegedly arriving in Donetsk from Makiivka at about 9 AM according to a Vk.com group “Donetsk is Ukraine!” posting (see section II: Problems of the written sightings on social media), but is then moving back again to Makiivka by a different road about 2 hrs. later.

- All license plates on the video are intentionally blurred. This could be to protect witnesses, but it’s evenly fair to assert this is to block the finding of witnesses who could falsify the existence of this convoy at this day.

- A still with high resolution was shown at the 24.5.2018 presser of the JIT. Apparently JIT had received it from the original uploader. It was used for the “fingerprint matching method”
to compare the Buk on this still to a Buk from the Russian Kursk brigade (see also [7]), as the high-resolution still showed some white marks that were not seen on the published video [9].

- Also Bellingcat received the HD version, as Eliot Higgins assured: “We contacted the uploader of the video and got in touch with the person who filmed the video.”. This shows also this piece of evidence arrived at the public by a remarkable route. The videomaker was not the one-time uploader; the published video was intentionally blurred; and only the right parties got full access and showed limited openness afterwards. About the same happened with the Paris Match stuff.
To the images above: Wowihay, involved in a realtime 12:06-17 Buk sighting in Torez, the first tweeter of the launch plume picture, one of the first re-uploaders of the Snizhne video after it was deleted from Youtube, contact of the SBU, and now as it seems also Makiivka video promotor. Invoking the fear-of-reprisal argument seemed to show he knew the video uploader/filmer as this person had expressed his feelings as he “was worried his identity would be exposed”.

Problems:

• No date visible on dashcam video, timestamp unknown;

• The timeline of the trail is problematic because of the high average speed that is needed to reach Zuhres/Torez (>50 km/h), not confirmed by calculated speeds from Makiivka (~37-41 km/h, by Micha Kobs) and Zuhres videos (~25 km/h, by Kobs and Ukraine-at-war).

• Possibly the video stems from an earlier date: Damage done to the road by a convoy that drove on there two days before, can not be seen; see remarks and examples given by “Ole” [10] and images below.

Bellingcat’s Aric Toler remarked that these tracks could not be seen because they were withered away by the traffic and the video was blurred as it was. First argument seems strange as AP’s Peter Leonard wrote 8 days after the Buk allegedly drove through Snizhne, its marks were still visible [11]. This video was taken 2 days after tanks left their markings on the street. Secondly, after Bellingcat got the HD version, they did not reveal if this high resolution version showed the tracks or not.

• The time of the video can be verified as 11:07 EEST. However, there are discrepancies between the convoy on the video and the Buk movement as seen on a Digital Globe satellite image, acquisitioned on July the 17th, 11:08 EEST, displaying the same part of the route (see next item in this report).

[8] https://twitter.com/Kev371A/status/733335374118916098 Probably with this software the quality was lowered to even show artefacts leading the Buk to vanish under the shadow of a tree, see this image http://imgur.com/hmcZXht from a poster named Basic Dimension.
No tank tracks visible on still from the Makiivka video. Not in front of the gasstation and not behind it.
Site: Makiivka, Avtrotransportna Street (48.018095° 37.984661°)
Source: Stratfor, private intelligence firm, in cooperation with AllSource Analysis
URL: https://www.stratfor.com/analysis/examining-evidence-russias-involvement-malaysia-airlines-crash
First known publication: 13 May 2016

**Salient details:**
- Publication only 22 months after the crash, 1 day after Bellingcat made public the Makiivka video; No source, date or geolocation were given by Stratfor;
- Satellite image has been taken at almost the same time as Makiivka video shows according to shadowcasting analysis (11:08 EEST);

*The Satellite image came up a day after Bellingcat announced finding of the video. It was captured at almost the same spot as the Makiivka video showed. From this was concluded the Buk was filmed in the Makiivka video from 11:07 EEST. Image credit: Micha Kobs.*

- So the truck with cargo was captured at almost the same site as the 3 May 2016 video; the difference in time between the car with dashcam passing the truck and the truck being captured on the satellite imagery is about 45 seconds. This times the video on 11:07 EEST, which corresponds with a refined shadow casting analysis performed by Micha Kobs (not published).
- Next to the timing there are some markers shown in both video and satellite image alike:
  - a truck with a white cabin carrying some cargo;
  - a white car presumably standing idle along side the road on the same spot in both video and satellite image. Other markers, two cars seen on the video parked along the road and at the roundabout, can't be seen, possibly because shadows and/or trees impair the vision from the satellite.
• Late appearance is remarkable for as US intelligence community would probably study satellite imagery on a daily basis and put all military convoys under surveillance, including transport vehicles implicated in these transports – like the unique truck. This imagery must have been assessed on 17.7.2014 or shortly thereafter. The question is why they were withholding this evidence to put it out in the open almost 2 years later.

• On May 22nd 2016 the imagery appeared simultaneously on Google Earth and the Bellingcat website [12]. (Also imagery of the alleged launch site region from 16.7.2014 re-appeared after it was gone for a few weeks [13]).

Problems:
• Low resolution results in observations that few markers for verification are visible. Nor is the cargo, the alleged Buk, clearly visible; The GE imagery is even worse.

• Obviously an important marker is missing (blue stripings on the truck cabin); More trucks with white cabins were available in Donetsk truck yard [14]; Even the Ukrainian army moved Buds around on civil trailers carried by a white truck [15]. There are problems verifying the accompanying cars as seen on the video.

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Possible discrepancies between Makiivka video and the 17.7.2014 Digital Globe satellite image, taken about 45 seconds after the video. Cars standing idle along the road match both video and SAT positions (see red arrows). 1. and 2. The front cars as seen on the video seem to be missing on the SAT; 3. and 4. The two cars following the truck closest seem to drive on the other lane in the opposite position, especially nr 4.; 5. The last car as seen on the video drives about 12 seconds after the truck whereas it drove 5 secs. after the truck on the video. On this busy road this just might be another car; 6. A car standing perpendicular to the road on the video could be rendered differently on the SAT (the site seems to be a parking lot); 7. A grey car parked at the other side of the road cannot be seen on the SAT.
Two objects, obviously cars, seem to drive on the other side of the road. The two cars in the front of the truck are absent. The last car of the convoy would have been lagged behind more than twice its original distance as seen on the video. This is probably another car.

- The truck might have another color. It could be the color of the cabin is smeared in front of the vehicle, caused by an effect called “ghosting” when the multispectral (colored) imagery of the object has been taken on a slightly different time than the black/white imagery. A fine example is a Google Earth image of the same site made 4 years earlier.

*Image above: From two cars the color has been smeared in front of the object itself, causing the “ghosting” effect.*

*Image on the right: Does the Stratfor satellite image show this ghosting effect too, as its seems some greenish color has been smeared in front of the cabin?*
• The width of the cargo seems to be small in relation to the width of the truck. According to a blog posting from Masami Kuramoto this is caused by the fact the leftmost missile is not mounted on the Buk, as also is corroborated by the shadow of the Buk on the satellite imagery.

Because on the Makiivka video the Buk has been mounted with 4 missiles and the satellite most probably is genuine, this would mean the video has been forged somehow or has been made on another day.

Second corollary is, as Kuramoto claims: “(...) if the satellite image is genuine, there was indeed a Buk in Makiivka, but it doesn't quite fit into the larger narrative. Bellingcat maintains that the same Buk was filmed on July 18th, allegedly on its way back to Russia, carrying three missiles (but in a different configuration).” [16]

Besides, next to the narrative of the fleeing Buk missing one missile, also the realtime WowihaY tweet mentioning the Buk was carrying “4 missiles” would become a problematic discrepancy within the entire track-a-trail chain of evidence.

• **Update:** JIT solved the marker question as mentioned above by using a high-resolution still of this video for their fingerprinting analysis [17]. With this the white markers on the left side of the vehicle were made visible.

Apparently the filmer handed over a high resolution version of this video [18], as he seemingly did to Bellingcat as well. Both refused to publish this new video.

[13] https://twitter.com/MaxvanderWerff/status/740527695633753681
[14] https://twitter.com/HectorReban/status/732605335094059008
[15] Ukrainian Buk 312 carried by a white truck https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Z_fCz-z7Ppo
[17] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rhyd875Qtlg
Site: Zuhres, N21 [19]
Source: @3Andryu (17 july, deleted) aka @m_a_s_h_ua (22 july), aka "Andrey And" (Youtube channel)
URL: https://docs.google.com/file/d/0B-QvELHUEYulaGpBZ21ma1RTUkE/edit?pref=2&pli=1 (22 july)
First known publication: 17 july 2014 (deleted; see image below), again on 22 july [20]

The deleted 17.7 tweet from @3Andryu, which didn't get much attention at first. With the nickname @m_a_s_h_ua he tried again on the 22nd.
@3Andryu's twicsy site reveals he is the same person as the one posting on twitter with the nickname MASH (@m_a_s_h_u). All photos have been deleted from this account.

Salient details:

- Tweeted along with specific coordinates.

- Both times the video was published on twitter, it was sent directly to Dajey Petros (renowned anti-Russian blogger Ukraine-at-war). Petros even first dismissed the video because of suspicion of fraud. When Bellingcat’s Eliot Higgins pointed to him that it fit the timeline of a Buk trail, he caved in.

- Before it got attention from Bellingcat on the 22nd, on the 19th the SBU published a still from this video together with two pictures of the Vostok convoy to suggest the Buk drove in a big “terrorist” convoy (see also Sections II and IV). Petros, who claimed to have dismissed the video at first, already had posted the same composition of images – so including the Zuhres Buk still – in a blog post that was dated on the 17th.

- Probably the videomaker was in direct contact with the SBU, as the stills were handed over to Inforesistance, Ukraine-at-war and SBU website without the existence of an open source version of a video of the Vostok movement as filmed by Andrey.

- At first the original source was unknown. According to investigation on location by Max van der Werff, see [We1], the apartment from where the video was taken, was inhabited by an alcoholic, who was frequently absent and died a few months after the video was taken.

- However, on June 1st 2016 a remarkable video was issued by a private Russian research project, “MH17 Inquiry”, in which an interview was shown with Andrey Andryushin, the maker of the Zuhres Buk video [21]. Stage of the interview was the same apartment from which this video was taken [22].

- His identity was confirmed by Bellingcat's Aric Toler [23], social media profiles with photo collected from Andryushin [24] and records which showed a man with this name actually lived on that particular address. Most important statement he made was that the video actually had been taken on July the 5th instead of the 17th.
Problems:

- Unrealiable date if taken into account the wind seems to blow from a southern direction where eastern wind was expected [25]. This is valid for both 5 and 17 July. See also report [Gr] for confirming (north)eastern wind direction on 17th at that time of day. Weather – cloudy with now and then some sunshine - and wind (4-5 Bft from a southern direction) at this time of day match best with forecasts for 30 June, 11 and 14 july.

- Though metadata are circulating on social media, these data can be altered. See for example this tweet [26] (the video has been taken with an I-phone 5).

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[19] https://www.google.com/maps/@48.0173376,38.3009095,345m/data=!3m1!1e3
[20] https://twitter.com/m_a_s_h_ua/status/491610039854317568
[21] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VvgaJYKRM8Y&list=PL0ccJ_mvRtPIH61Uw56pYFXTEQO
[23] https://twitter.com/AricToler/status/748926663946276864
[24] http://radaris.ru/p/%D0%90%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%80%D0%B5%D0%B9/%D0%90%D0%BD%D0%B4%D1%80%D1%8E%D1%88%D0%B8%D0%BD/
[26] https://twitter.com/MichaKobs/status/735377659790798849
Southern wind seen at the Zuhres video, as shown by “Ole” [25], was not present on the 17th. This way can be concluded the video must originate from another day (see weather forecasts 11 and 14 July below).

Weather in Zuhres on the 11th and 14th matches best the weather as seen on the Zuhres video, clocked at 11:40 EEST. Southern wind could not be seen from 29.6 – 17.7. South-eastern winds on depicted days come closest. From the Vostok videos is known the wind at the 17th at that time was north-eastern.
Site: Torez, Gagarin Street in front of the Stroi Dom shop
Source: Unknown.
URL: https://vk.com/wall-5063972_387136?reply=387168
First known publication: 17 july, published on a military Vkontakte portal/chat goup (deleted), first traceable to Ruslan Nasadyuk in a reply on a VK.com account (20:09 EEST).

Salient details:
• In a later posting in the same thread Nasadyuk explained the picture he downloaded was posted in VK.com chatgroup ¨Overheard in Torez¨ together with the tag the Buk was moving ¨from Torez to Snizhne¨.

• Point of view photographer, lying down on the ground or kneeling (in front of a tankstation), is interesting: Was he on a surveillance mission? Only 1 photo was published, though one could expect there might be more if the photographer took special position [Update: I made this assessment before the Torez video and the Tornado connection were known. See below].

• Dutch news show Nieuwsuur broadcasted a short interview with the advisor for the Ministry of the Interior Anton Gerashchenko, in which he said that Ukraine had installed a permanent realtime video monitoring system based on internet in Torez and sites nearby [27]. However, this system was out of order at the 17th, as he claimed, because the internet would have malfunctioned. So the story is maintained that only ordinary citizens provided Buk images.

Problems:
• Unknown timestamp, original source unknown.

• Suspected of wrong dimensions and so possibly fake, shown in calculations performed by Kemet, administrator of webtalk.ru in [Ke].

Kemet measuring the Torez Buk.
By measuring and projecting Kemet finds the trailer on the Torez picture is only 9 meters long. It should be 12 meters. Conclusion: the photoshopper made some mistakes [Ke].

- Citizen investigator Max van der Werff found two witnesses nearby who claimed the transport was going by some day before the 17th. [28]

[27] http://nos.nl/uitzending/25862-nieuwsuur.html See from min. 17:00
Salient details:

- The video is heavily edited, as according to the JIT: “For safety reasons related to the source who actually made these images, the background has been cut out.”

- An implicit confession was made by a leader of the ultranationalist militia “Tornado”, a unit connected to minister for the Interior Arsen Avakov, implicated in criminal actions like kidnapping and torture. According to this source men from Tornado had taken the imagery of the Buk in Torez [28];

- The Buk on the video looks the same as the one on the Torez picture. Even the flaps of the netting do not show any movement by the wind along the way of the transport through Torez (see image below); Apart from the folded flaps it also looks like the Buk on the Donetsk Photo;

- The wheels on the right side of the Torez Buk (left on the image below) seem to match the wheels on the right side of the Buk #332, the Buk which would have arrived from the Russian Kursk convoy moving close to the Ukrainian border at the end of June (right).
• At the video in Zuhres and at the photo in front of the Stroi Dom shop in Torez a Jeep UAZ is seen as driving right behind the Buk. In the Torez video it is driving behind the Van.

• The dried-up dirt on the window of the Van matches the dirt on the Van as seen on the Makiivka video.

The dried-up dirt on the front window of the dark Van escorting the Buk transport seems to match both Makiivka video (left) and Torez video. Probably both videos have been made at about the same date. Which date is open for questioning.

Problems:
• The video is undated and the source is unknown. Besides, JIT edited the video severely, so investigations into specifics are impaired.

• The Jeep UAZ, a feature of the transport used to verify, is driving behind the van (on the Torez photo it’s behind the Buk) and seems to drive with the door open. One could imagine this part of the video might have been founded on an animated photo of a Jeep standing idle. Then maybe the rest was too.
The Tornado connection of the Torez Buk images

Site: **Snizhne**, Karapetyan Street in front of flat 13, 48° 1′ 1.0014″N 38° 45′ 20.25″E [29]
Source: Unknown.
First known publication: 17 July 2014, 23:04 EEST.

The picture of a skewed Buk on Karapetyan street Snizhne, driving against the curbs. The story it was hiding behind the apartment blocks sustains the “demand for secrecy” narrative, an irrational explanation.

**Salient details:**

- The Buk was also allegedly seen parked across No.1 Schools at Karapetyan street 80, a few hundred meters away, according to rumours and hearsay after the 17th [30]. Was the unloaded Buk parked twice at the same road? Was it driving by when it was captured on photo and did it park later? Or were rumours spread which evolved in a way not entirely consistent with the picture that appeared late in the evening of the 17th? See also section III, the July 25 AP article.

- Reason for unloading the Buk in the city is not clear; The question comes up why the truck is not hauling the missile launcher all the way to Pervomais’kyi village near the alleged launchsite. The story about a Buk hiding behind a few apartment buildings because of its need for stealth existence, seems to be irrational. However, around the corner in 50 years October street there was a separatist Headquarters.

- Position of the self-propelling Buk on the street is skewed, as if it is driving against the curbs on the other side of the road.

- Geolocation was performed by Koreandefense.org [31] (within the same network as Bellingcat) using the information issued by well-known infowarrior @GirkinGirkin [32]. He posted the photo on 18 July, 0:27 EEST with the following message, mentioning very
specific clues:

#Snizhne About the Russian gunners and Buk in Snizhne “its from a house of 50 years October [street], it [intranslatable], near coal [restaurant] and Furshet [market]”

Of course it would be interesting to know from whom @GirkinGirkin got the information first known source Vlad Polienko also had 1,5 hrs before (see below).

Problems:
• Unknown timestamp, no original source known. First known poster lived in Kiev at the time.

Vlad Polienko, first known poster of the Snizhne Karapetyan picture, was in Kiev at the time he relayed the information. (Translation bottom posting: “Ksuyhin, at the moment I am in Kiev, but most of my life in Snizhne”). He also claims the Buk was parked on Karapetyan for a pretty long time, near the Coal and Furshet market and 50th October anniversary street, so this was obviously part of the information package he retrieved or received – as did GirkinGirkin. It seems Polienko knows better from his residence in Kiev than the local friends of Ksuyhin, who were at the site around that time, but hadn’t seen anything.

• According to measurements on location performed by Max van der Werff and calculations done by Micha Kobs, the dimensions of the Buk seem to be an anomaly. It is much too big to fit into the picture (not published).

• Witness account on the spot from 25 july Peter Leonard (AP) article [33] says tracks were visible because the Buk damaged the street. For unknown reason no visual confirmation (photo, video) was captured of this.

NB: the interview appears to have been taken place on the same spot as where the Buk was seen, because the witness is said to point to the tracks. Obviously reporter and witness have been brought in to contact with eachother. Its not plausible the 64 year old retired miner was coincidentially at the same spot as he was on the 17th, when he was interviewed by Leonard
on the 25th. Question is of course how Leonard was led to this very rare first hand witness.

- According to information given at the JIT presser from 28.9.2016 the Buk was off-loaded near the Furshe Market in Snizhne at about 13:00 hrs. There it apparently also was seen by AP reporters and BBC Sweeney's witnesses (see section III). Then it had to be moved towards the site where it was photographed, and waited there for about 40 minutes. Finally it went off to the crossroads with Gagarin Street to go to the south.

- A few things don't add up. First, the position a JIT animation is showing the Karapetyan photo is mistaken [34]; Then also the route the Buk went, taking the crossroads of Lenin street – instead of Karapetyan st. - with Gagarin street, can only be explained if the Buk went forth and back between Lenin street and Karapetyan street.

- Second, time of capture, calculated by shadow-casting analysis performed by Micha Kobs [35], is at about 13:45 EEST. This is inconsistent with timing of the Snizhne video (12:30-13:00, but closer to 12:30 EEST, see [Ko2, p.58-63]), a location the Buk must have arrived after passing Karapetyan street and Gagarin street. In fact, the entire Snizhne timeline of the Buk route is problematic [36].

[30] https://twitter.com/southeastua/status/489819714357850114
[32] https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/48984062577094656
[33] https://web.archive.org/web/20140727002710/http://bigstory.ap.org/article/what-happened-day-flight-17-was-downed
[34] See animation 3 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf6gJ8NdYAY, from 4:25
[35] https://twitter.com/MichaKobs/status/644076224931831808
Site: **Snizhne**, T0522 street (48°00’25.00¨ 38°45´51.00¨)
Source: Video shot from apartment belonging to Vita Volobueva, Gagarin Street flat 43, 9th floor, apartment 143 – see report [Gr] and article [We] for details.
URL: https://vk.com/wall-5698635_18352?reply=18506 (video deleted); re-upload WowihaY
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OAxpT5AiKhQ&feature=youtu.be
First known publication: 17 july, <20:33 EEST

Still from the Snizhne video, re-uploaded by @WowihaY’s Torez.info minutes after the original already dissapeared from YouTube.

**Salient details:**
- On the 15th Vita posted on her VK.com site a photo of the Savur Mohila area [37], a point of view in the same direction as the video. She was monitoring the fights going on there. On the video, allegedly taken on the 17th, the presence of smoke in the background is salient.
- The video was published on a one-time used Youtube channel opened on the 17th. Original video was deleted within approximately 1 1/4 hrs. after publication. A re-uploaded version appeared on Torez.info (and other channels), the website @WowihaY was working for, at 21:45 EEST.
- Vita lived in the same building as Andrey Tarasenko, a pro-Kiev nationalist. He was alleged witness of the launch plume and acquaintance of Buk sighting and launch plume tweeter @Wowihay (see also section II.). Both moved out of the city in August 2014 according to their social media accounts, Volobueva to Wilnius Lithuania, Tarasenko to Kiev. Were they also evacuated, like WowihaY (Vladimir Djukov) and Rescuero (Pavel Aleynikov)?
Problems:

- Vita had a clear view from her apartment at the alleged launchsite, which was about 4 km away. She filmed the Buk at 13:30, according to the officially endorsed timeline, but obviously didn't hear the alleged sonic boom from the firing of the missile as she failed to capture the plume a few hours later.

- Timeline problems regarding the timing in Snizhne city. Micha Kobs sets time of capture of this video between 12:30-13:00, but closer to 12:30 EEST (see [Ko2, p.58-63]). But the picture from flat 13 Karapetyan Street shows shadows that point to 13:45 EEST [38].

- ProKiev social media user @sl0zhny traced back the time on which the YouTube channel of “Bolodya Familiiev” was opened. This was the channel that was used one-time only to publish this video – deleting it again after little more than an hour after it was uploaded:

  “This turned out to be a simple matter, but the result was unexpected: "published At": 2014-07-17T09:27:21.000Z (the video channel was created at 12:27 pm Kyiv time).” [39]

  This means that the channel was opened 10 minutes BEFORE the video was captured according to the shadow casting analysis by Micha Kobs and one hour before the official timing, which is set on later than 13:30 local time.
• The date is uncertain; The weather on the video seems to be very cloudy, with an overcast sky, contradicting the sunny weather at about the same time on the Torez and Snizhne pictures. For an elaborate discussion see my blog post [40]

• If not faked, as the report by Sergey Mastepanov [Ma2] shows it could be, the video could stem from the 15th, 16th or 17th, as seen on the image below:

![Image of video and photo comparison]

Someone cut bushes in front of his house, as seen on a still from the video, which were still present on the Volobueva picture from the 15th. Most probable scenario is this happened not long after the photo of the 15th was taken. This way the video could also stem from 15, 16 or 17 July. Credits: Ole.
Did the smoke as seen on the Snizhne Buk video arrive from one or two burning fields in line of sight of the video taker? If so, the video could be dated at 16 July.

[37] https://vk.com/wall-5698635?day=15072014&w=wall-5698635_16237%2Fall
[38] https://twitter.com/MichaKobs/status/644076224931831808
[39] http://mh17replica.mybb.ru/viewtopic.php?id=179&p=2&fbclid=IwAR1Xjlx4gom4nv5p6gMfwSLHDhD55N1pQC80P8r3y3EFjml7amgW76tpcq3Y
Site: Chervonyi Zhovten-Pervomaiskyi (alleged launchsite, 47°58´26.83¨ 38°45´50.57¨)
Source: @rescuero (Pavel Aleynikov) plume picture, posted by @WowihaY (Vladimir Djukov)
URL: https://twitter.com/wowihay/status/489807649509478400
First known publication: 19:23 EEST

Salient details:
• After 5 months a second plume picture was brought to light, taken 7 seconds before the first one. (For an examination of the plume discussion, see also [41], [42], [43]).

• Ukrainian official Anton Gerashchenko, advisor for the Ministry of the Interior, is suspected of being involved in disseminating this picture; [44]

• A second witness of the plume appeared in the media [45], a source almost unnoticed. It was Andrey Tarasenko. See more in the next item and in section II.¨Problems of the written sightings on social media¨.

• The Dutch Safety Board final report didn´t mention a specific launchspot, so was not relying on the plume as evidence. However, on September 28, 2016, the JIT showed that the picture was used in a triangulation effort - with a new plume picture found (see next item in the list) - to get the launch site.

• Unmentioned was, however, JIT (and Bellingcat) had strayed away from the actual charred spot that reporters Miller and Oliphant had found 5 days after the crash on the same field, after a geolocation effort by blogger Ukraine-at-war. Those spots of scorched earth actually were located at the west side of the field. The newly endorsed spot was 300 meters to the east. (More about this, see next item in this report).

Problems:
• Most prominent is that the trail consists of dark smoke curling up into a white plume, but calculations show these two trails have no relation to each other [46]. So the dark smoke is not a trace of a first-stage exhaust from a Buk launch, as Bellingcat's position was (and according to Eliot Higgins still is).

• Nor is it smoke from a burning field set on fire by a Buk launch. [47]

• Furthermore, the plume seems to be about 90 meter wide and visible from 12 km. after 3 minutes. There are no other visual examples of this kind of Buk launch plumes known.

• Micha Kobs did some interesting calculations to find a timeline of the events with the help of both Aleynikov photos of the plume and of the smoke from the burning wreck to determine the wind speed at the time. This way he reached the conclusion that: the launch spot was wrong; the trail was unrelated to the downing of MH17; or the EXIF data - the timestamps fixated in the internal clock of the camera - were altered; or any combination of these [48].

• With new Google Earth imagery (Google is a Bellingcat sponsor) Bellingcat tried to verify the launchsite [49]. They performed this by detecting certain markers – existence of a ploughed mound (pretty common in the area), tracks presumably from a Buk vehicle (or a
harvester) and a burnt field presumably because launch would have set the field on fire (or because farmers performed a controlled burn, as can be seen on 16.7 GE imagery on several other fields in the neighborhood). These markers would be absent before the 17th, but visible a few days after. Therefore a launch inflicted them [50]. Of course, there are lots of other possible explanations.

- So geolocation of the launchsite based on this plume, centerpiece of the SBU/Bellingcat/Ukraine-at-war storyline, actually has been debunked in every aspect. This casts doubts on the entire Buk-trail-to-Snizhne narrative.

After the first two launch plume pictures came up, investigators found 10 severe problems. Most problematic for the trail was that calculations proved the trail existed of 2 unrelated parts and the white part could not have arrived from the alleged launch spot.
Site: Farmland near Pervomais'kyi, shot from an apartment building in Snizhne north [51]
Source: Unknown; There is a connection with infowarrior Andrey Tarasenko
URL: Animation 3 JIT, from 6:50 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf6gJ8NDhYA
First known publication: by JIT on 28 September 2016

Salient details:
• JIT claimed they found this picture of the alleged plume of a Buk launch in Spring 2016 on social media.

It is assumed origin of the picture must probably be found in an observation post that had a camera running with a view to the south. As Andrey T., belonging to an interconnected group of Torez/Snizhne based infowarriors (see also Section II), tweeted 2 days before the crash a picture from the same site [52] with an exactly matching point of view [53], it not certain why this image was not disseminated to a large audience before. This also sheds severe doubts on the JIT claim they had found it “after intensive research”.

The new plume picture, linked to Snizhne based infowarrior Andrey T. aka @aparabellum_ua, allegedly found by JIT in spring 2016 after “intensive research on social media”.

• The plume only consists of a white part, contrary to the plume on the Aleynikov picture, which also showed black smoke, according to Bellingcat a “first stage exhaust of a Buk launch”.

Problems:
• The plume is triangulated with the Aleynikov plume and an unknown witness account. As
Micha Kobs showed with straightforward physics, the Aleynikov plume could not have arrived from the claimed launch spot, because of its wind drift, So I its remarkable, to say the least, the new plume also matches perfectly with this “impossible launchspot” [54].

- It would only be logical the new plume does not show black smoke if the line is followed from calculations done by German engineers Ole and Micha Kobs, which is: the black smoke must have arrived from another origin than the white plume [55].

The “new” plume (right) does not show the black smoke that is visible on an enhanced version of the Aleynikov plume picture (left). Because this would corroborate the dissident position both parts were unrelated, the question comes up why the black smoke curls up so neatly into the white plume.

- In a reply to criticism Bellingcat's Daniel Romein had stated [56]:

“(...) The claim that the grey smoke and white smoke trail are not connected does not make much sense, since we obviously can see on the image that where the grey smoke ends, the white smoke trail starts.”

Bellingcat founder Eliot Higgins never distanced itself from this initial assessment, though Romein figured out that the black smoke should have been dust instead of a first stage exhaust – another ludicrous assertion.

- Moreover, the JIT does not give any sound explanation for black smoke curling up perfectly into the white plume on the Aleynikov pictures other than making a statement. “NFI (Dutch Forensic Lab) does not have any indications this photo was manipulated” [57] – which, in fact, is not the same as stating the photos could not have been tampered with.
However, making this statement clearly shows all parties know about the inconsistencies these photos entail. Interesting will be to see in court if JIT performs a triangulation with two conflicting plume pictures – one with and one without black smoke – and if they come up with an explanation for the features of the black smoke on the Aleynikov pictures.

Bellingcat’s Eliot Higgins appeared in a BBC documentary, aired on May 3, 2016. Apparently even then he did not distance himself from the initial assessments, as the left frame shows the launch spot as envisioned, located at the origin of the black smoke.

Left: Article from January 27, 2015, in which Romein stated the black smoke was part of a first stage exhaust of the launch plume.
Right: Later he revised his story. The black smoke would be a backblast of dust, an assertion just as ludicrous.

https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2015/09/06/the-mystery-of-the-two-faced-launch-plume/
https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/case-studies/2015/01/27/examining-the-mh17-launch-smoke-photographs/comment-page-4/#comment-9243

Animation 3, from 6:35 https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sf6gJ8NDhYA
Site: Luhansk [58]
Source: Secret surveillance unit/ Ukrainian secret service (SBU)
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=L4HJmev5xg0
First known publication: 18 july, 12:32 EEST, by Ukr. Secretary of the Interior, Arsen Avakov [59]

Salient details:
- Conflicting statements were given by several Ukrainian officials about transports and time. It was said two Buk transports together consisting of two TELs (loaders), a TELAR (Buk) with only 3 missiles and a CP (command post) or a TAR (radar vehicle) passed the border to Russia at 2 AM and 4 AM [60]. The time the unique truck passed Luhansk, driving alone and carrying a Buk “missing one missile”, was set on 4:50 AM;

- Initially Avakov conveyed a wrong location. In first instance he mentioned Krasnodon, close to the Russian border. However, the site the video was taken appeared to be in Luhansk. See for elaboration on this video also [60].

- On the July 19 presser counter-espionage chief Nayda published a still of this video together with a photo of Buk 312, of which soon was revealed that it belonged to the Ukrainian army themselves. This was a blatant, but early detected example of spreading disinformation to construct a Buk-trail (see also [Ma2]).

Изображение видео с анонсом БУК М1, показанное Найдой на пресс-конференции, 19-го.

There are severe problems dating this video on the morning of the 18th.
a. On the 18th the truck with Buk on its way to Russia must have been driven straight through frontarea or even Ukrainian controled territory; The M04 to Luhansk was blocked as Bile and Yubileine were captured by the Ukrainian army and the airport in Luhansk west was under fire. So even the part of north-west Luhansk, where the Buk was spotted, was a no-go area for a separatist transport, that is: when rationally avoiding danger (like a transfer over the border at Marynivka, not far from Snizhne, obviously would be too dangerous as well). See image below.

LiveUAmap from 18 july of the Luhansk area. Bile and Yuvileine, villages situated at the M04, were captured by Ukrainians. Also heavy fights were reported in Luhansk West, especially around the airport area. Though along the M04 in Luhansk West no blockposts were erected yet, it would not be advisable to pass cities with presence of the Ukrainian army and areas with heavy fighting.
• **b.** From a presser by Ukrainian official Andrei Lysenko on the 17th, 17:00 EEST, could be derived there already was a video present of a Buk transport in Luhansk BEFORE the plane crashed, though this one was never published. This begs the question if actually a new video was captured in the morning of the 18th or if the posted video already existed before [61].

• **c.** According to administrator Kemet of discussion forum webtalk.ru the video shows a lightpole shining where in the morning of the 18th there was a total energy black-out in the area. [62]

![Still from the Luhansk video. In the yellow circle a lightbulb from a pole is shining. On the morning of the 18th, however, a total power shut-down was reported, caused by ATO bombings, which would show the video is misdated. The other source, left, could be the sun at a position corresponding with a time of about 9 AM, according to [Ke].](image-url)

[58] https://www.google.com/maps/place/48%C2%B032%2744.7%22N+39%C2%B015%2752.6%22E/@48.5453906,39.2655573,907m/data=!3m1!1e3!4m2!3m1!1s0x0:0x0
[59] https://www.facebook.com/arsen.avakov.1/posts/670837696339673
II. Problems of the sightings on social media

All accounts, salient details and some general problems: See also my series of blogposts “How to use sloppy thinking for disinformation” [63]

Site: Donetsk
Source: @Occupied_Rook
URL: https://twitter.com/Occupied_Rook/status/489701199953010689
First known publication: 12:20 EEST

Translation:
In the morning, it was written that it stood at A[venue] Shakhtostroitelei at the intersection with Ilyich [Avenue], in the direction of Makiivka. They were most likely waiting …

Salient detail:
- Though he could have read the information in a posting from VK.com group “Donetsk is Ukraine!” (see below) as it says: “In the morning it was written…”, the direction he points to contradicts this. The Vk.com posting mentioned in the direction of Donetsk, Occupied_Rook says “in the direction of Makiivka”.

So was there another written account? Then why did this WowihaY friend not point Bellingcat to this source?

Its my personal impression that information may have been fed to a few trustworthy sources, for example through a telephone network of informants pro-Kiev locals maintained (as WowihaY shows screenshots from this on his twitter timeline on several occasions as well [64].This might explain why probably all postings showed second-hand accounts disseminated by pro-Kievites. This way “sightings” were constructed, sightings that may have depicted events that did not exist in reality.

- Same poster alludes to Buk use about ¾ hrs after the crash, tweeting: “Fits a Buk. I think it [the plane] flew over 4000 meters”. [65]

Problems:
- This is not a first hand account.

- Rumours this tweeter had picked up about the presence of a Buk in Donetsk at the crossroads of Ilycha Avenue and Shaktostroitelei Avenue, led after the crash of MH17 to a quick conclusion a Buk had been used to down the plane. Even before Ukrainian officials issued accusations and pointed their finger to Putin's missile. This shows how sensitive people are for suggestions possibly planted by spreading rumours.

[63] https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2019/08/03/how-to-use-sloppy-thinking-for-disinformation-part-1/
[64] https://twitter.com/WowihaY/status/489749063588257792
[65] https://twitter.com/Occupied_Rook/status/489773504683081730
The Necro Mancer tweets. Was it a Strela or “something similar to a Buk with one canon” but “without missiles mounted”? 
Translation 1st tweet:

#Donetsk 30 minutes ago at Ilyich Avenue near the dairy factory something like a Strela ADMS under an awning was carried on a platform, accompanied by 10 (passenger) cars [or: a 10 seater car or: 10 passengers?] #Stopterror

Salient detail:

- This tweet was first missed or ignored by Bellingcat to only pop-up in a report a year after the crash;

- Necro Mancer received information from several informants without deep knowledge of the vehicles they observed.

Problems:

- Original source unknown; it’s not a first-hand account; According to another tweet in the thread he claims his information provider probably did not see it himself.

- Several tweets from Necro Mancer about this alleged sighting show contradicting and unreliable information; His Buk account actually is an (mis)interpretation from an informant without deep knowledge, who himself maybe is influenced by disinformation spread about a Buk transport. This account should be dismissed as a Buk sighting.
The “Donetsk is Ukraine!” posting featuring a sighting lasting at least 15 minutes, from 9 – 9:15 AM (maybe – but this is not specified - assembled from several accounts). It shows very specific information which alludes to a surveillance operation. The posting mentions a Toyota RAV4, which can be seen on the Paris Match photo, and a Jeep UAZ, which showed up on the Makiivka video, the Torez picture and the Torez video. The dark blue Hyundai never appeared again, though the Makiivka video shows a black VW van.

Salient detail:
- Made public by Bellingcat only 19 months after the crash [66]. Their report conveyed three sources more, but these seem to be copies from this posting (or have the same original source) as they contain the exact same information but were posted later that day.
- These other accounts were written on Vk.com group “ATO in Donetsk-Donbass News” [67] and probably via Konstantin Golubtsev [68] published on FaceNews.UA [69] and Kriminal.TV [70] too.
• It is of course interesting all new Buk sightings are from Donetsk and appear only after 1 year (Neco Mancer) or almost 2 years after the events (then even 4 at the same time). With these last accounts the opaque Necro Mancer and Occupied_Rook tweets get leverage again.

• Note the wording: coming “from Makiivka” and “proceeded to the intersection with Boulevard Shakhtostrotelei”. Presumably the informant was mobile and able to watch for at least a quarter of an hour where the transport came from and were it went to for some kilometers. Was the transport under surveillance?

• VK.com messages can be edited for 24 hrs after initial posting. Photo publications have a timestamp, messages haven’t.

• The transport was seen, according to these postings, driving along the N21/ Makiivka Highway to the crossroads at Ilyich Avenue and Shakhtostrotelei Avenue in Donetsk, where it apparently blocked the road. This is the same site conveyed in the Occupation_Rook tweet. Also Necro Mancer tweeted this location, though the heavy transport was reported by him on the other side of the road, near the Dairy Factory, going into the opposite direction back to Makiivka. In that same direction it was captured by the freelance photographer for Paris Match, almost 2 hours after the earliest sighting. After that they took another road through Makiivka (see section I, the Makiivka video).

• Sourcing: the question arises why this information, written by an administrator with obviously a very strong pro-Kiev affiliation, was not brought in to Bellingcat much earlier. It is not plausible this source – or the three others for that matter – did not know about the role Bellingcat has taken on in the information war, promoting firmly the US/EU/Kiev side in the conflict. Also Ukraine-at-war was a well known collector of pro-Kiev information at this time, see the Zuhres video, but wasn’t used to report these messages.

Problems:
• Original source unknown; As this Vk.com site is a news site (the other three are too), it apparently was used to feed the information to.

• None of the Donetsk reports are first-hand accounts, though theoretically the posting on the newsite of “Donetsk is Ukraine!” could be.

• If the truck with Buk stood almost 2 hrs standing in Donetsk and driving in between Makiivka and Donetsk on the very busy Ilyich Avenue/ Makiivka highway, even blocking the road for some time, there must be tons of witnesses. However, not even one written first hand account appeared on social media.
The Donetsk sightings.

1. Necro Mancer tweets; transport reported going into direction of Makiivka at about 9:45 EEST.

2. The “Donetsk is Ukraine!” posting and its offshoots, reporting the transport coming from Makiivka Highway/N21 at 9:15 AM.

The Occupied_Rook tweet mentions the same crossroads as these other sources, with direction towards Makiivka. This would entail he got information from another written source – which is unknown at this time.

3. Khmuryi and Sanych agree at 9:23 AM to take the “you know what” transport with Vostok, but Vostok left without Buk at about 10 AM. The alleged truck with Buk transport waited for another hour before it went en route itself.

- The JIT initially advertised the Luhansk route via Makiivka to Donetsk as the way the Russians would have brought in the Buk in the night of 16/17 July. But as we have seen reviewing the Luhansk video, this was a dangerous route these days. So if the Buk transport was moving from the direction of Makiivka at 9:00 AM, how did it pass the M04 in the Luhansk area?

- It is not clear what happened between 9:23 EEST when Vostok subcommander San Sanych told Khmuryi where to deliver the Buk – that is: “behind” the Motel – and the time the Buk was apparently still waiting to be photographed by the freelancer at 11:05 EEST at a time Vostok had already departed an hour before. There are no intercepted calls displayed about these troubles, though Khmuryi and the DPR soldier he gives the order to organize the transport to, agree to stay in contact. “If anything happens, we keep in touch”.

The late departure of the truck with Buk also lead to severe timeline problems. The 40 tons heavy transport would have to bridge the 60 km distance to Torez, where it allegedly was spotted at 12:07 EEST, in only one hour. About 60 km/h on average seems to be an incredible speed, especially with respect to calculated speeds of the convoy (25-40 km/h).

[66] https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2016/03/04/8110/
Translation:
Shakhtarsk KAMAZ terrorist [?], 3 tanks. before this possibly passed Buk, covered with an awning #ato

Problems:
- Original source unknown, its probably not a first-hand account.

- Wrong information: The message was posted at the time the Vostok convoy passed through Shakhtarsk [Ko2]. Presence of a KAMAZ was reported, but that vehicle didn’t drive in that convoy that day, as can be seen on several videos available from the Vostok movement. Also @WowihaY and Necro Mancer mentioned the KAMAZ in a tweet. WowihaY even tweeted a screenshot from his phone to show the received information [Ko2].

- According to this tweeters history he was, like Necro Mancer, @WowihaY (see below) and some others, especially occupied with relaying information from other sources about separatist maneuvers. After the crash he reported the news of Buk presence in the area from a presser by Ukrainian official Andrei Lysenko, instead of mentioning his own reported realtime sighting [71]. Probably he didn’t see the Buk himself but seemed to have used the official statement to re-enforce credibility of his speculation about Buk movement.

So the Buk part of the tweet could have been arrived from hearsay, speculation and conjecture, probably based on the @WowihaY tweet. Apparently the tweet contains some mixing up of reality and rumour and should be dismissed as a Buk sighting, although it is part of the trail evidence in the Bellingcat report “Origin of the separatist Buk” (8 november 2014).

[71] https://twitter.com/spice4russia/status/489789841937530880
Site: Torez
Source: @WowihaY
URL: https://twitter.com/WowihaY/status/489698009148837888; https://twitter.com/WowihaY/status/489700047215685632
First known publication: 12:07 EEST, 12:16 EEST

Translation:
12:07 EEST: Past us, toward the center drove air defense installation. 4 rockets, said to be Buk #stopterror #Torez in the direction of #Snizhne

12:16 EEST: Buk travels through Torez at Snizhne #stopterror

Salient details:
• Poster also was the first one to tweet the image of an alleged Buk launch plume (see below).

The 19:23 EEST tweet with the alleged launch plume that made @WowihaY famous. WowihaY claimed in an interview [72] there were photo´s made of this Buk passing through Torez. However, allegedly these photos were never published, due to fear for reprisals, an often heard justification. See [Gr]. However, he was not afraid to post the plume picture.

• “4 missile” tag conveyed; the “from Torez to Snizhne” tag conveyed;

Problems:
• Unknown original source, its not a first-hand account according to a tweet [73] and an interview of the source himself [74]. He claims not to have been in the area that day.

[74] https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/interviews/2015/07/27/interview-with-wowihay/
Site: Torez
Source: Euromaydan (Facebook)
URL: https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/photos/a.523254484437560.1073741828.523004674462541/652533661509641/?type=1&theater
First known publication: 12:17 EEST (opening text-box writing down first info)/13:15 (posting)

Translation:
13:15 EEST “In Torez in the direction of Snizhne drives a BUK. Information from local residents”

13:17 EEST “In Torez in the direction of Snizhne drives a BUK. Accompanied with machines and terrorists. Information from local residents”

13:18 EEST “In Torez towards Snizhne drives a BUK. Accompanied with machines and terrorists. Information from local residents”

17:32 EEST Update: According to the spokesman of the RNBO [=Andrei Lysenko from the Ukrainian National Security Council; HR] there is information the terrorist are in possession of advanced missile launching systems.

Salient details:
- This message was edited a few times; first message only spoke about a Buk sighting reported by “locals”; the message edited 2 minutes later probably added a (probably: Vostok) convoy to the sighting (“machines with terrorists”); a second editing stressed clearer the “from Torez to Snizhne” tag (see also [75] and [Gr]).

- @WowihaY was a “local” who reported the Buk sighting, just 10 minutes earlier than the text-box was opened. That he was in close contact with Euromaydan Facebook can be testified by a Facebook message they posted on 17:11 EEST, showing a picture of plume photographer Aleynikov [76]. @WowihaY had these already in his possession at the time, as is known from an earlier tweet showing another Aleynikov smoke picture. He reposted the Euromaydan posting with his own conveyed picture at 18:14 EEST [77].
To make a long story short: it is possible @WowihaY was the one informing Euromaydan about the Buk in Torez going towards Snizhne around midday. Their editing of the posting to contain the “terrorist” machines (probably the Vostok vehicles) must stem from another source as @Wowihay reported this convoy separately at about 13:00. Of course its interesting why they decided to blend these strains of information together to construct a big terrorist convoy with Buk, which did not exist in reality but was also peddled by the SBU afterwards.

Problems:
- Unknown original source (“locals”, possibly @WowihaY); it’s not a first-hand account;
- After the first editing the message showed wrong information, which could be traceable to the “Khmuryi”/Motel intercepted telephone calls (see section IV: “Problems of the intercepted telephone calls”) that stipulate the Buk would be transported along with the Vostok convoy, a convoy “with machines” (3 tanks) and “terrorists” (on a Ural vehicle).

Also Ukrainian politician Dmytri Tymchuk, blogger Ukraine-at-War [78] and the SBU peddled after the crash the false story of the Buk going with this convoy, which was on its way that day to the fightings near Marynivka and passed the same route as the alleged Buk transport.

However, there is no evidence the Buk was part of the Vostok convoy (see [Ko2] and [Gr]). Nevertheless the SBU followed this storyline, by issuing a still from the truck with Buk in Zuhres together with pictures from Vostok passing Zuhres. See also [79] for details.
The invented convoy, using a still from the Zuhres video and two images from the 17.7 Vostok movement, captured at the same site. This narrative, issued by the Euromaydan Facebook posting and still propagated by the SBU and Ukraine-at-war long after the 17th, conveyed the Buk went with a “terrorist convoy”. In fact it didn't, as Micha Kobs showed in [Ko2].

[76] https://www.facebook.com/EuroMaydan/photos/a.523254484437560.1073741828.523004674462541/652614801501527/?type=1&theater
[77] https://www.facebook.com/Djukov/posts/4425500693742
Missile system was driven on a tractor + two cars for cover through Torez towards Snizhne at 12-10.

**Translation:**

*Missile system was driven on a tractor + two cars for cover through Torez towards Snizhne at 12-10.*

**Salient detail:**

- This tweet mentions specifics, like “two cars” and “on tractor” and the “from Torez to Snizhne” tag. The well known journalist Roman Bochkala and AP’s Peter Leonard (see section III: “Problems of witness accounts by journalists”) may have copied this information after the crash to claim “locals” saw a Buk in realtime.

**Problems:**

- The “two cars” tag is interesting, for as in the Zuhres vid, suspected to stem from an earlier date, 2 cars can be seen accompanying the truck with Buk. In the video showing the transport in Makiivka, published much later, there were still 5 or 6, in Donetsk, according to Necro Mancer, maybe even 10. A year after the crash WowihaY mentions in the interview he gave [80] that “people were immediately reacting they also [sic] had seen the Buk and two cars”, matching the sighting of his twitter friend Roman with foreknowledge.

- Probably this is not a first hand account; If not, it could be that this specific information has been fed to fit the imagery of the trail (tractor/trailer, two cars, as could be derived from the Zuhres video). Via tweeter Roman, journalist Bochkala (see section III) and The Interpreter, a large anti-Putin news agency who used Bochkala as their source, this very information was spread over the net within 2 hrs after the crash. Euromaydan, collecting the evidence to suggest kind of a trail first, also published the Roman tweet in a live-blog from 20:17 EEST, see Appendix 2 in [81]
• In a documentary by GJ Dennekamp for Dutch news show Nieuwsuur [82], the reporter says (26:00):

“I thought it was remarkable – though in hindsight also obvious; but I hadn't thought about it that way - that Ukraine was actually keeping an eye on that route. I was told, we were told, that the route actually was monitored directly by the Ukrainian security service via cameras. That system would have been broken, in mid-July, would no longer work because the internet had become bad. But they still had the "spotters", so they knew what was moving back and forth.”

The precondition that there was bad and sometimes apparently no internet connection possible, could mean that Roman, a Donetsk citizen, could not post from Torez itself. This says this tweet with specifics also was a second-hand relay, as were the Wowihay Buk accounts. Roman mostly posted news from the Torez-Snizhne area that day and also reported the Vostok and the Oplot convoys. However, also WowihaY – not around – did this. Roman never stated he saw the Buk himself.

[80] https://www.bellingcat.com/resources/interviews/2015/07/27/interview-with-wowihay/
Site: Snizhne
Source: @HallaHupS
URL: https://twitter.com/HallaHupS/status/489709368427167744
First known publication: 12:53 EEST

Translation:
And at this time in Snizhne appeared SAM “Buk”

Salient details:
• Not mentioned in Bellingcat reports;
• No specifics given.

Problems:
• Unknown if this is a first hand account, an information relay from another source or just a conjecture based on reading the WowihaY and Roman tweets. See also his tweets in which he conveys a view over the trail without mentioning himself [83]

• Time the Buk supposedly entered Snizhne – before 12:53 EEST, the time this sighting was tweeted – does not correspond with the timestamp of the 13:09 SBU video displaying a call between the Buk crew and someone pointing directions. According to this call the Buk had not entered Snizhne at this time yet (see also Section IV)

Some of the people @HallaHupS is following on twitter: Andrey Tarasenko and another known infowarrior, @spice4russia. Again this alleged sighting arrived from a nationalist pro-Kiev source as are all the others. However, it is not certain when he started following Andrey Tarasenko and the others. It seems from their tweet history they are not acquainted.

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[83] https://twitter.com/HallaHupS/status/492908242251808768 and https://twitter.com/HallaHupS/status/490095215630618624
СД
Сегодня в 15:08:33

Город Снежное
Translation:

SD
Today at 15:08:33
Region Snizhne

Salient details:

- Citizen investigator Arnold Greidanus claimed this would be a first-hand separatist sighting [84], which is very questionable.

- Time as written by the administrator, 15:08, seems to be Moscow Time. Then time probably would be 14:08 local Donbass time (EEST);

- The Buk on the picture is a Ukrainian one, according to Greidanus from a museum in Vynnitsia;

- There is a large time lapse between the upload of the picture (12:51 EEST), the proposed time of the information relay by the source (14:08 EEST) and the posting of the message (16:05 EEST). Posting is only 15 minutes before the missile was fired;

- A poll has been attached: “Bought at the weapons store – for protection from airstrikes [Y/N]”

Problems:

- This group copied information from other sources, ie. from forum-antikvariat.ru (on which also commander Igor Girkin participated) and Strelkov_info. Also some individuals were copied, ie. “Greyseven” and “Sextus Pompey”. As a source also “SD”, the source of this particular message, can be seen regulary. So it’s not a first-hand account.

- The question is if this SD sourced a first-hand account or was merely speculating with information (s)he collected from ie. the Euromaydan Facebook posting or its off-shoots.

- Maybe SD posted a message or got into contact with the administrator at 14:08 local time, so therefore this posting was timed as such. Obviously according to the early upload South-East News already had heared rumours and maybe they took SD for a reliable source. The conclusion Greidanus drew that this posting should be assessed as a first-hand account from a proseparatist source – because of its specific time of 14:08:33 EEST - is completely unfounded (why should someone mention tenths and hundredths of a second?). SD may have read Euromaydan or one of its copies that were posted after 13:30 and sent his conjecture to the South-East News message board.

Site: Oktyabr, Snizhne
Source: Women A and B in a Zello conversation, published by Wowihay/Torez.info, Ukraine@war blog
URL: zello 17 июля 2014 г. канал торез-шахтерск-снежное
and http://ukraineatwar.blogspot.nl/2014/07/tapped-prorussian-conversations-confirm.html
First known publication: 24 July 2014

From the transcripts of the conversation (see sources above) a witness testimony of a launch plume is derived:

[2:25] woman B Guys! I’ve just listened to the story... (sigh) Right then, I was at the garden, at Oktyabr’ (... sound, out of nowhere, there was droning sound. It was silent right before that, and then suddenly there was loud droning sound... I [looked] at the sky, err, something was flying... well, I, I can’t tell for sure, well, from that direction, it was flying as if from Saurivka. I thought it was a missile, ran inside the house, shouted to my mom, well, after we went down to the basement, only then did we hear some bangs, explosions. But it was flying and smoking—with a white smoke—and strong buzzing loudly above Oktyabr’ flying there, you know, to... towards the town, in that direction.

Salient details:

• Again @Wowihay is involved in retrieving this presumed evidence;

• He also made an assessment where this witness lived.

• Also Bellingcat used a witness from Zello to establish the launchsite. However, they put the position of this witness at another site (see image below), but never disclosed their source after questions.
Problem:

- The woman obviously saw something flying over above Octyabr towards the Khimmash plant in Snizhne north. However, the direction from Saurovka over Octyabr to Khimmash does not match at all with the presumed launch trajectory.
However, Ukraine@war and @WowihaY think a curveball trajectory over Octyabr and Khimmash matches their launch site.
III. Problems of witness accounts from journalists

All accounts, salient details:
Three of reported first hand accounts of the Buk trail were said to originate from journalists, but all anonymously. They are, next to the Paris Match picture, witness accounts from (freelance) AP and Novaya Gazeta journalists.

In the meantime it has been established that the stills that Paris Match freelancer handed over to the magazine, arrived from an unknown source (see part I of this report). So only two first-hand witness accounts from journalists remain.

From the first one, by the AP freelancer, the identity behind the account has become known after I spoke with war-time photographer Vasily Maximov. He confirmed the idea that was already pretty certain, which was that the AP man should be the Russian photographer Dmytri Lovetsky [85].

Lovetsky has refused to answer questions ever since he was suspected of being the source behind this witness account. Biggest problem is that his testimony pivots around the need for secrecy directive, ie. that the Buk transport was meant to be a secretive operation, which is a pretty irrational story.

From all first-hand witness accounts, that is, the two mentioned above, the one from a miner in a 25 July article written by Peter Leonard (AP) and the few others, there is no visual back-up (photos, videos). The alleged need for secrecy of the Buk transport and the existence of scared witnesses with fear for reprisal comprise an implausible defense.

AP's Peter Leonard.

At least 4 reports in Torez, from the Wall Street Journal, The Guardian, BuzzFeed and The Independent, appeared on the same day, 22 july 2014. As it is customary in war journalism, many journalists could have been taken on a field trip together - in this particular case to Gagarin street in Torez, at the StroiDom market where the picture of a Buk was taken. Maybe journalists were even led to certain witnesses by a pro-Kiev guide and/or interviewed witnesses at the same time, leading to converging or even misinformed stories reinforcing each other.
For example, in The Guardian, BuzzFeed and The Independent articles a witness is mentioned who said that loud noise of the transport was the thing that triggered the memory. The Guardian writes about a “shopkeeper in one store”, BuzzFeed says “workers in one store” and The Independent mentions “a woman working in the Sport betting shop” and a colleague she phones.

The Independent is most clear. Its witness didn’t see the origin of the noise, but “heard something heavy passing by”. Maybe the Vostok convoy was heard. Besides, a Buk on a trailer, though a very heavy transport, actually does not make a lot of noise. So probably all three accounts alluding to Buk presence because of loud noise that was heard, stem from this single misinterpretation.

Its not simple to deny all witness accounts appeared in media from ideologically biased, anti-Russian (pro)western news organizations; These organizations seem psychologically and ideologically inclined to corroborate the standing anti-Russian narrative that fits their (tacit or outspoken) editorial policy and interpret events and accounts accordingly, causing their journalist work to be biased. The only exception in this review is the 22 july article published by The Independent.

Newspapers together on tour in war-zone Torez?

Some accounts could well have been “converged” to fit the BUK trail. Not necessarily deliberately, but that is the way how witness psychology works; one fits his memory (or other’s memory) to “facts” already established or to stories that seem factual, just and fair and match your ideology [93].

This also works for journalists – or for pro-separatist people seeing fighter jets for that matter. Next to this, these days even courts, lawyers and police officers are aware of the ability of third parties to introduce false memories to witnesses [86].

General problems:

• It is unknown how these witness accounts came about (there are no tapes available), i.e. regarding leading questions [87], confirmation biased approach, biased interpreting of given answers, witness psychology to interpret events to a much heard or desired story [88] or incentives to bend truth for personal gains.

• Also witnesses of certain ideological affiliation routed via a pro-Kiev contact/guide could have been interviewed. Examples of this are the Business Insider interview with Pavel Aleynikov and the interview with Andrey Tarasenko in NBC News mentioned before, see section II. Its is not plausibel the interviewers found them all on their own, its beyond assumption the journalists were made aware of their existence by certain intermediaries, presumably, in the two cases mentioned here, the WowihaY-Gerashchenko contacts.
• Furthermore, most witness accounts show information not verified, contradicting information or unreliable parts of information.

• The value witnesses in this case possess may be testified by work done by Correct!v.TV, also published by Dutch newspaper Algemeen Dagblad (AD). They (also) found credible witnesses of a non-event: a Buk launch from a site somewhere close to Snizhne, a launch site more than 10 km. north from the Ukraine-at-war site [89]

[87] https://agora.stanford.edu/sjls/Issue%20One/fisher&tversky.htm
[88] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eyewitness_testimony#Type_of_questioning
Site: Torez
Source: Roman Bochkala (journalist)
URL: https://www.facebook.com/bochkala/posts/771322946253430
First known publication: 17 July 2014, 18:07 EEST

Salient details:
• Bochkala is Facebook friends with Ukrainian politician Dmitry Tymchuk and official Anton Gerashchenko.

• Writer links Buk convoy to separatists taking in positions at UkrTelecom and Emergency Ministry in Marynivka. These separatists mentioned must be from the Vostok movement, because they drove to Marynivka that day. So also this account is probably connecting the Buk transport to the Vostok convoy on the 17th, a narrative proven untrue [Ko2]. Maybe Bochkala retrieved this information from the opaque Euromaydan Facebook posting (see section II in this report).

Problems:
• Unknown original source, it’s not first-hand information as was claimed on several outlets:

"There is information in the news [this says this is second hand info; HR] about the movement of the BUK. Supposedly the passenger plane could have been shot down today from this system."

• Specifics are echoing the Roman Torez-tweet (see section II: "Problems of sightings on social media"): 

"They drove the missile system on the trailer plus the two cars through Torez, in the direction of Snezhnoye, at 12:10. It looked like a BUK. The top was draped over."

Roman Bochkala, journalist, not hiding his true colours.
Problems:

- Unreliable account with contradicting information; It's not inconceivable that this witness is converging his testimony to the information conveyed a week before, when the SBU issued the story of a Buk "missing one missile" together with the Luhansk video:

  "He said what looked like the same truck later came back through town going the other way, without the missile."

- Interviewer is leading the witness to verify the picture of the Buk in Torez:

  "He verified a photo of the SA-11 going through town, shot from the gas station on the main road, as what he had also seen on the day of the crash."

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The photo of the Buk transport in Torez. Also a Jeep UAZ-469 is seen (bottom-left), but there is no other account showing or reporting two Jeeps. By the way, that day also a Jeep UAZ, though a newer model (a Patriot), was reported in the Vostok convoy. That convoy drove via Torez to Marynivka [Ko2]

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Site: **Torez**  
Source: The Guardian  
First known publication: 22 july 2014
Problems:

- There are no first-hand testimonies. Even third-hand accounts are put on stage in this article: The Guardian says that a shopkeeper said that his customers said some large vehicle had been a missile carrier;

- Contradicting information: according to the account 2 Jeeps were seen. There is no other account of this. The Torez Buk picture and the Makiivka video show one Jeep UAZ 469, in Vostok drove a Jeep UAZ Patriot. The Buk part of the “talk” – Were they gossiping about the news instead of exchanging first hand sightings?! – maybe was introduced because of the Torez photo and not because it actually was seen:

  "In another shop further down the street, there was talk of a convoy of two jeeps and a missile launcher covered in a net driving past in the direction of the town of Snizhne."

- Leading the witness to confirmation bias:

  "I've never seen anything like it," said a middle-aged woman. She said her husband showed her a photograph of a Buk launcher afterwards and she realised that was indeed what she had seen.

- Unreliable account, biased journalism: Also in this account is said loud noise triggered the memory of the witness. But a Buk on a hauler doesn’t make a lot of noise:

  "We were inside and heard a noise much louder than usual," said one shopkeeper (...).

Site: Torez
Source: Max Seddon, BuzzFeed
URL: http://www.buzzfeed.com/maxseddonlocals-say-rebels-moved-missile-launcher shortly-before-mala#.explJvvjWA
First known publication: 22 July 2014

Salient detail:

- The journalist speaks of questioning customers “near” StroiDom market where the Buk photo was taken, but the shop itself was closed at the time the transport allegedly came by, because the roll-down shutters were closed. This was confirmed by [We1] on the site.

Problems:

- Contradicting accounts; accounts that did not verify Buk presence are neutralized with the fear-of-reprisal argument:

  “The locals all asked not to be identified for fear of reprisal from the rebels, who control the town. Many of the residents who spoke to BuzzFeed denied knowing anything about the launcher or claimed that it had never passed through the town.”

- Unreliable account, biased journalism: Noise triggered witnesses again, but actually saw nothing:
“(…) workers in one store said that the one [convoy; HR] that passed through last Thursday was much louder than ones they had seen before.”

Site: Torez
Source: The Independent
URL: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/malaysia-airlines-mh17-crash-was-a-russian-made-missile-really-parked-in-this-quiet-square-9622031.html
First known publication: 22 July 2014

Salient details:
• The Independent is the only source not finding any account alluding to a Buk sighting:

““All the Ukrainian media is lying,” said one man, Andrei Sushparnov. “We have no missiles. If we did, would the Ukrainians be bombing our cities?”

“I saw this picture on the internet. But there was no such vehicle parked here,” said Svetlana Eivashenko, a 50-year woman with red hair. “I wish Ukraine would leave Donetsk in peace.”

The staff at the petrol station said none of them had been on duty last Thursday. A woman who gave her name as Diana and who worked in a toy shop called Briefcase, said she had been at work last Thursday and had seen nothing, even when she stepped out for a cigarette break. “I did not see that, for sure,” she said.

Mr Toler admitted there was no irrefutable proof the image was taken on July 17 as claimed by the Ukrainians. But he said an internet search revealed the picture did not appear before the 17th. "And it matches accounts in other videos and pictures along with audio intercepts," he said

The Independent spent around 90 minutes at the location in Torez, at times drawing a number of animated locals who looked at the image and shook their heads.”

• There is that noise again, but this journalist is interpreting it in another, less loaded way than his colleagues from The Guardian and BuzzFeed:

“The only hint of a positive answer came indirectly from a woman working in the Sport betting shop. She had also been off last Thursday but her colleague, whom she contacted on the telephone, said she had “heard something heavy passing by”.

The colleague (a third-hand witness) also heard, but did not see. Probably she heard the Vostok movement going through town at about 13:10 EEST.
Salient details:

- This is one of only two known first hand accounts from journalists, though again anonymously:

  "On the morning of July 17th the «Buk» was sent to a position in the area of Snizhne. This was observed by locals, around 12.15 our freelance correspondent saw the Buk coming, carrying four rockets."

Problems:

- The account, written down a year after the crash, displays information also known from Wowihay and Roman tweets (Possibly they are those "locals" mentioned a few times in stories from journalists). After the SBU issued the Luhansk Buk flight video adding the “missing one missile” story, the “4 missile” tag mentioned, is all the more salient.

- There is, again, no visual back-up (photo, video) of this sighting.

- The Buk was not in Snizhne at around 12:15 according to the tweets by Wowihay and Roman, but in Torez.

- It’s customary for journalists to have local, “freelance” informants in war-zones. Testimony of this “freelance correspondent” could stem from a pro-Kiev contact, e.g. a local journalist or another local Kievite informant converging his story to the desired narrative.

  Of course it would add prestige to your record if you state you were there to see it, using already known information to beef up your claim. So also personal gain could give an individual local reporter or informant an incentive to invent a testimony.

  Anyway, it is not advisable to trust an account of someone purportedly working “freelance” for a well respected (though fierce anti-Putin) newspaper at face value, especially when his identity is unknown, the circumstances around the emergence of his testimony are unclear and there is no visual back-up.

- The journalist [90] in question maybe is Vladimir Djukov, alias Wowihay, himself. Djukov worked for the local news network Torez.info [91]. For example, he interviewed Tornado leader Ruslan Ornishchenko [92] for this network, which he probably founded himself.

[90] In a list of infowarriors, Djukov is named “journalist” http://mama-demokratii.livejournal.com/194170.html
[91] https://torez.info/
[92] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNX4K Tb30X
“An Associated Press reporter on Thursday saw seven rebel-owned tanks parked at a gas station outside the eastern Ukrainian town of Snizhne. In the town, he also observed a Buk missile system, which can fire missiles up to an altitude of 22,000 meters (72,000 feet).”

Salient detail:
- This is one of two first hand accounts from journalists.
- Two AP reporters were known to stay in the area that time, Mstyslav Chernov and Dmitry Lovetsky. Lovetsky is the photographer who took pictures of four tanks from the Oplot convoy at a gas station in Snizhne on the 17th. He also took pictures of a Ukrainian Buk movement in Slavyansk on July the 5th.
- In an AP article on the 25th (see below), written by Peter Leonard is told the witnesses (— by the way, in the first AP dispatch copied by Daily Mail it was one witness —) heard Buk crew in strange uniforms speaking with a “distinctive Russian accent”. From this information we may assume the witness was a native speaker or very well acquainted with the language.
- “The vehicles stopped in front of journalists from The Associated Press. A man wearing unfamiliar fatigues, speaking with a distinctive Russian accent, checked to make sure they weren't filming. The convoy then moved on, destination unknown in the heart of eastern Ukraine’s pro-Russia rebellion.”
Second salient observation: the source of the picture of a Buk in Snizhne, parked at Karapetyan street, used by Bellingcat is someone nicknamed @GirkinGirkin. In his commentary to the picture from 18 July, 0:27 EEST [93] he also claims “Russian” crew was seen.

Obviously its interesting to think about the question how this information was established, as he himself probably did not hear or see the crew himself, as he was relaying the photo from another source. The first source to have posted the photo was in Kiev at the time and did not say anything about Russian crew (see Section I, the Karapetyan photo).

Anyway, fact is these testimonies match each other very well. The impression is there photo and witness testimonies about Russian speaking crew could well be from the same anonymous source. That is, its not plausible the Buk crew spoke around in appartments of Karapetyan street buildings – or everywhere else - to silence witnesses with their Moscovite tone in order to sustain the existence of several separate claims.

The picture of a Buk on Karapetyan street Snizhne. The Bellingcat Buk trail source @GirkinGirkin claimed the crew was Russian. Though it was not mentioned in the first known publication of the photo, this would fit the testimony of the anonymous AP reporter who allegedly saw the Buk cruising in Snizhne and was threatened by a crew in strange uniforms and Russian accents. However, Girkin, who was a known infowarrior reporting regularly about separatist maneuvers and who got a copy of this photo with specific clues about location, was not a first hand account and at the time of his tweet he had to be unaware of this AP testimony. The question pops up how he knew about the Russian crew and the exact site the photo was taken (see Section I) and who had been his source.
Problems:

• Allegedly constituting a first hand account, but first record of it is only written after the crash and therefore not in realtime when the actual event took place. This makes this account of less value.

• There is no visual back-up of this alleged Buk sighting, though it was made by a photographer; There would have been made threats by a distinctive Russian Buk crew in strange uniforms not to take pictures, according to this witness as follows from the 25.7 Leonard article. This justification is not rational for as it would show a funny sense of being in control, knowing the Buk drove through densely populated areas in broad daylight all day.

• The fact that this witness, although his identity is known at this point of time, is not willing to answer questions related to this topic, does not make his testimony more trustworthy.

[93] https://twitter.com/GirkinGirkin/status/489884062577094656
Salient detail:
- Time of this alleged first hand account is very specific (13:05 EEST), matching the official, Bellingcat endorsed timing of other social media sources constructing the trail known at that time (especially the Snizhne picture and the Snizhne video). However, this very exact time is given only 8 days after the crash, when knowledge about the alleged trail was evident.

Problems:
- Leonard is using specifics from already known information at that moment, from WowihaY ("four missiles") and Roman ("accompanied by two cars") tweets, with the impression added an AP journalist also saw this on the 17th. Actually it is unclear which part(s) of this information stem from the alleged witness(es). Leonard starts with this: "AP journalists saw the Buk moving through town at 1:05 p.m."

Then this sentence follows, but actually its not clear if this is publically known information added or from the witness itself: “The vehicle, which carried four 18-foot (5.5-meter) missiles, was in a convoy with two civilian cars.”

- To back his story up, Leonard released a note [94] a year after the crash.

Peter Leonard published a year after the crash a note on twitter which made the AP witness account all the more opaque. It says his colleague(s) saw the Buk on 11 AM coming from the south. According to the officially JIT endorsed trail it should be around 1 PM, coming from the west.
• It showed a contradicting time: According to his notes a Buk was seen by his colleague (or colleagues, as he claimed now) on 11:00 instead of 13:05 EEST. Second, the note contained information about the direction the Buk was coming from. It said “coming from south”. In fact the Buk came allegedly from the west and went to the east along the Karapetyan. Eventually it took a turn to the south via the T0522. So what was this note all about?

• There is no visual back-up of this witness account, in which is said track marks of the Buk were seen on the asphalt of the street (NB: the interview is held on the very same spot):

Valery Sakharov, a 64-year-old retired miner, who pointed out the spot where he saw the missile launcher. "The Buk was parked on Karapetyan Street at midday, but later it left; I don’t know where," he said. "Look — it even left marks on the asphalt".

It was known from the Lovetsky photos of the Oplot tanks at the gasstation (see image above), the transport did severe damage to the road. If the journalist had taken photos of these Karapetyan marks, it could be investigated if the tracks there really were from a Buk or just from the Oplot or Vostok tanks.

Why didn’t Leonard take a picture of tank tracks on the road as pointed to by his witness?
• Were was it parked? Was it hiding behind flat 13? Or was it parked near the No1. Schools? Leonard doesn't say. Though his witness bolsters the Karapetyan Buk photo, he complicates the Buk route as the JIT depicted.

• Reporter is leading a witness to confirmation of a desired narrative:

  Townspeople who spoke to AP said it [the BUK] rolled into Snizhne around lunchtime. "On that day there was a lot of military equipment moving about in town," recalled Tatyana Germash, a 55-year-old accountant (...)¨

  Well, that was true, because the Vostok and Oplot convoys were present that day overthere. But what this isn’t, is a clear-cut account of a BUK sighting. The impression is there, but it is not clear she corroborates the suggestion that to all those movements also a self-propelling BUK belonged. Something like this: “A transport of a missile carrier was reported here. Did you see it?” “Well, I indeed saw a lot of military equipment.”

[94] https://twitter.com/Peter__Leonard/status/605701062226550784
Salient detail:

- The interview with Putin Sweeny as showed in this article and in a documentary he made for BBC “Panorama”, was edited by Dutch state newsshow “Het Journaal” to play out a story Putin was bluntly dodging tough questions about the MH17 case [95].

Problems:

- Unreliable witness accounts.

- The off-loading of a Buk, corresponding to already known information which emanated from the Snizhne Karapetyan picture with the offloaded Buk and the Snizhne video of a self-propelling Buk, is set on 13:30 EEST. This doesn't match the time Micha Kobs calculated of the Snizhne video, between 12:30 and 13:00 but closer to 12:30 (see section I). It is not inconceivable Sweeny interviewed a ProKiev witness who converged his testimony to a known and trusted narrative.

> One eyewitness saw the missile-launcher roll off a low-loader at Snezhnoye, around ten miles from the crash site, at around 13:30 local time (10:30 GMT). "We just saw it being offloaded and when the BUK started its engine the exhaust smoke filled the whole town square," he said.

- Also the story of a Russian crew - with strange uniforms and Moscovite accents, information earlier shown in the @GirkinGirkin tweet and the AP witness account – reappears.

> The eyewitness told the BBC that the crew struck him as Russian soldiers: "Well-disciplined, unlike the rebels, and not wearing the standard Ukrainian camouflage uniform sported by government and rebel troops alike." "They had pure Russian accents. They say the letter 'g' differently to us," he said.

> In eastern Ukraine, most people speak Russian but the BUK crew did not speak Russian with a local accent. His testimony was confirmed by a second eyewitness [Lovetsky?], who added that an officer in a military jeep escorting the BUK spoke with a Muscovite accent.

The fact the information is aligned with the Kiev narrative of a “Russian invasion” and the witness speaks about “them” versus “us”, seems to make the assumption valid Sweeny interviewed proKiev nationalist sources, sources with a clear inclination or interest in matching their story to the desired narrative. The Jeep matches information known from the Torez photo.
• Also in this case we should ask how Sweeny came into contact with his witnesses. By whom were they suggested to him?

• In an 8.9.2014 interview with “Het Journaal” about his documentary on BBC “Panorama”, in which these witness accounts were mentioned too, he himself showed some reserve with respect to the veracity of the accounts.

Salient details:

- Russia Today wrote a story about one of the witnesses interviewed, Pyotr Fedotov: “MH17: witness says reporter falsified testimony” [96].

- The Reuters story displays the “fear-of-reprisal” justification, the same way as was done in a Novaya Gazeta report from the same village (see below): Only off-the-record the witness changed his testimony, allegedly because he was afraid of rebel authorities. Afterwards the witness denied he had spoken off-the-record about the Boeing.

  Reuters: (...) at first said on camera that it was fired from territory held by the Ukrainian army. Later, off camera, he said it was launched from a nearby rebel area. Asked why he had originally said the opposite, he said it was because he was afraid of the rebels."

- RT: (...) then my friends told me in the article I was saying different things when the cameras were on and off. That’s when I understood why he was asking if I was in trouble,” the witness explained. “So it’s mere fantasy from the journalist or maybe he was doing it for his own benefit,” he added.

  Even the Russian minister for the Defense Lavrov stepped in, accusing the interviewer of “stove-piping”.

- Also Max van der Werff interviewed this witness, see [We1]. Though Fedotov now claimed again a missile was fired, from a Ukrainian zone, it hadn't be a Buk. This statement can't be verified either.

  OK then. He said it was indeed the rocket, but the installation [whatever launched it] might not be even Buk, because there is only one rocket on it. Comba nyor — he didn’t say who this is — anonymous Comba nyor, the man who worked at the fields, saw the launch and the vehicle, from which the launch was made. The place where the launch was made at that time on July 17 was in control of Ukrainian forces. It turns out that they moved this weapon from the rear to practically a frontline, made a launch, and moved it back to rear.

- Fedotov was interviewed again by Christopher Miller for Mashable in July 2015 [97]. Miller rephrased the Zverev/Reuters story or got the same answers as the last one did. Fedotov even pointed to the alleged launch site now, something he had not done before. Apparently he also had seen a missile flying over him, a pretty unreliable account (see curve-ball trail below).

Problems:

- Notwithstanding the Reuters testimony could be false, the claim the witness made was unreliable and not verified:

  "The rocket was here, it wiggled around, then some kind of rocket stage separated, and then,
somewhere toward Lutuhyne, Torez, I saw the plane fall apart in the air.

The story of a wiggling missile with a two stage launch, a feature not present when a Buk is launched, is remarkable. Furthermore, Reuters never tried to confirm the exact location Fedotov pointed to [We1]. The plane flew above cloud base at a height of 10 km, at a distance of 28 km, though there were some spots blue sky between the clouds. However, it is not credible someone from Red October could have seen the hit, anyway, not as more than a flash of light.

Furthermore Fedotov would have said to Miller that he:

“(...)watched as the missile struck a plane and fiery debris fell to the ground.”

This is very unlikely, regarding the cloud base and the distance from the launch site to the crash-site.

• Three other villagers claimed to have seen something like a rocket:

"It took off, at first we thought that a plane was crashing. But it was a rocket," said Kovalenko, 45, who then saw what she thought was smoke coming from the 'Progress' mine in Torez, a town 9.5 km away to the north-west.

“The mine Progress” is a soundbite originating from the first dispatches after the disaster, a location about half way the actual main crash site as seen from the outskirts of Torez and Snizhne North-West. Such an assessment is not credible when seen from Chervonyi Zhovten, which is in fact about 19 km from the crash site, not 9.5. Its is clear this testimony is contaminated by knowledge acquired after the event.

Her daughter Anastasia Kovalenko, 14, said she saw a rocket flying over the village, and then a plane in the distance blowing up.

Olga Krasilnikova, 30, also said she saw a rocket, some time between 4 and 5 p.m. "I saw it was flying, flew right over me. From that side," she said, pointing to the outskirts of the village . "I saw smoke in the sky, then I heard an explosion and I saw a huge blue (cloud of) smoke."

The plane flew above cloud base at a height of 10 km, at a distance of 28 km, though there were some spots blue sky between the clouds. However, it is not credible someone from Red October could have seen the hit. Maybe this witness means the explosion on the ground, but apart from the smoke the actual collision could probably not have been seen at that distance.

Actually, Mrs. Kovalenko corroborated this in a BBC documentary broadcasted on 3 May 2016, as we shall see below. Contrary to her daughter she claimed she saw what was labeled as a missile, “disappeared behind the clouds”. Then a few minutes later she heard kind of an explosion.

• The Reuters report emphasized that the eyewitness accounts didn’t conclusively prove that the rocket they saw was the one that downed Flight MH17. This is a conclusion easily
supported. Reuters never was prepared to hand over the original video of the interviews nor did they publish the GPS coordinates of the launch site claimed by Fedotov.

- Probably the same witness, mrs. Kovalenko, was also interviewed by both Dutch state television network NOS [98] and De Volkskrant [99] newspaper.

NOS: “A 40 year old lady saw a red missile. She saw a white stripe. Not from the checkpoint away, but further south and points in the direction of the next village Stepanivka.” Stepanivka was a village south from Snizhne at about 6 km, heavy shelled that day from Ukrainian positions.

- De Volkskrant: “A woman of about 40 tells she was reeping potatoes form her garden together with her mother.” The same introduction is given by the NOS reporter. Together they interviewed this woman, apparently Mrs. Valentina Kovalenko. Remarkable is that she was working in the fields reeping potatoes with her mother, contrary to what she said to Reuters. To Zverev she told she was working on the field with her daughter, who also allegedly saw something interpreted as a missile.

- That news organizations take over witnesses from each other may be attested by the fact also the BBC documentary “The conspiracy files; who shot down MH17?”, which was aired on 3 May 2016 featured mrs. Kovalenko too (see image below, from min 26:40). Though Reuters’ Zverev interviewed her in March 2015, BBC still acclaims credit for finding her: “We found one woman with an intriguing story to tell”. [100]

“I turned around and said [to my daughter]: Good God, a plane was hit!” But it was going the wrong way, not down but up, with a flame and a black trail coming out of the back.” [Narrator: As it flew passed her she realized this was not a falling plane but a missile being launched]. “It was flying around there. Then we saw the trail of black smoke and it kept going over there [pointing in half a circle above her]. We saw what turned out to be a missile but it went behind the clouds. And a few minutes later we heard something similar to an explosion. But on this day we never saw planes.”
• In this interview she said she saw black smoke and not a “white stripe” (NOS/De Volkskrant). However, a Buk missile only displays a white trail, because – as forensic specialist Charles Wood mentions – there is no two-stage exhaust after firing [101].

According to the JIT, as stated in their presser from 28.9.2016: “Several witnesses had stated to have seen the inversion trail of the missile; the witnesses described the trail as white, very thick and very long”. This was apparently not what mrs. Kovalenko, most cited witness in western media reports, had seen.

• Mrs. Kovalenko also stated: “It took off, at first we thought that a plane was crashing. But it was a rocket” (Reuters). “It was going the wrong way, not down but up” (BBC). Maybe the rocket part was an interpretation of what she saw or a contamination of her memory after the fact, added from knowledge as claimed by the standing narrative. Something that does show the characteristics going up, looking like a hit and leaving black smoke could be what can be seen in this video [102].

To Reuters she claimed to have seen smoke near the mine Progress, to the BBC seeing smoke from the actual crash is not mentioned again.

Two witnesses from Red October/Chervonyi Zhovten, including Pyotr Fedotov, claim the missile flew over them. This way the actual trajectory of the missile must have been a strange curveball if the Bellingcat/Ukraine-at-war launchsite was true.

On this day sites south from Red October, especially Stepanivka, Savur Mohyla and Marynivka were shelled and possibly also bombed by SU-25 fighter jets after midday. The use of Strela, Smerch [103] missiles and Tochka U’s [104] by the separatists in this area about this time has also been reported. It is remarkable the witnesses interviewed all point to the south of their village as the site of a possible launch.
Kovalenko also appeared on German television network ZDF, see from 18:54
http://www.produktion.co/video/Flug-MH17-Verschwörung-oder-Wahr
[102] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZLUPzfSdTw
[103] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xs36PwOJi
[104] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1KQGEuFMOE

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[99] http://www.volkskrant.nl/buitenland/heeft-u-hier-een-buk-raket-gezien~a4024652/?hash=9af4fbf3417b22dd154be8e3b4065632ec8e3
[100] Kovalenko also appeared on German television network ZDF, see from 18:54
http://www.produktion.co/video/Flug-MH17-Verschwörung-oder-Wahr
[102] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XZLUPzfSdTw
[103] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xs36PwOJi
[104] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m1KQGEuFMOE
Site: Chervonyi Zhovten (Red October)
Source: Novaya Gazeta
URL: http://www.interpretermag.com/there-was-no-buk-in-our-field/
First known publication: 10 June 2015

Salient detail:
• “Off-the-record” the fear-of-reprisal justification is conveyed again:

  Kanygin: Then I had better turn off the camera.
          I turned it off.

  Nikolai: I never saw once how the Ukrainian planes attacked.
          Nikolai Ivanovich continued confidently.

  Kanygin: By the DPR fighters?
          Nikolai: Well, sure. But that shot [at the Boeing] was from the ground or the air, I can’t tell
          you. But I didn’t see a second plane. Someone said there was one, but I didn’t see it.

  Kanygin: Could you say the same thing on camera?
          Nikolai: Will I be arrested tomorrow?

  Kanygin: For what?
          Nikolai: For the fact that I live on such a territory.

Problems:
• Unreliable and contradicting witness accounts. A witness, living within a kilometer from the
  alleged launchsite (Pervomais’ke), answers this:

  “No! At first I heard a shot, but where it was made from — whether from the ground or
  another plane — I don’t know.”

  A Buk being fired won’t go hardly noticed from this distance to the launch. The story build
  on this witness testimony is all the more incredible after Micha Kobs calculated the origin of
  the launch plume in the backyards of Pervomaiskyi residents [105].

[105] https://twitter.com/MichaKobs/status/748727745778053120
Salient detail:

- The witness is only 12 years of age, so must have been 10 years old when he allegedly saw and heard the things he tells the journalists.

Problem

- Witness remembers details about seeing the plane just after it was hit:

  “I saw how it [a rocket] hit the plane. A wing fell from it”.

  It is not credible anyone could see the plane fall apart from this area.
Site: **Grabovo**  
Source: Novaya Gazeta (video witness)  
URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRS64s4n-o4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eRS64s4n-o4)  
First known publication: 25 June 2015

**Salient detail:**  
- Novaya Gazeta is the only news organisation with a clear video of a first hand witness testimony, in this case from a 17 year old boy who allegedly saw the firing of a missile. 

**Problems:**  
- **Unreliable witness account.** Witness says for example:  
> “People began to fall out [of the plane], and the shell ripped. Then it broke into three pieces.”  

This begs the question how someone can see bodies falling out of a plane that still is located at some 10 kilometer height, even **before** the plane desintegrated.

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**Novaya Gazeta witness Anatoliy at Grabovo claiming he saw people falling out of the plane at 10 km height, presumably even before the plane disintegrated.**

- “It came somewhere from there (points to the south-east–PK). I remember exactly, the ball flew from there, and the plane popped out from there somewhere.”

Of course, southeast from Grabovo the city of Snizhne is located. But then again, this method of locating a launchsite seems to be a bit crude. In fact he also could have pointed to the Velyka Shyshivka/Zaroshchens’ke area, which is only a small angle away when pointing with a finger somewhere from a field near Grabovo. (In this area Ukrainian Buks could have been positioned within firing range from MH17).

- More statements can't be explained by simple calculations using the speed of sound [106]

IV. Problems of intercepted telephone calls

Designation: The Bezler-Garinin-Kozytsin confession taps
Source: SBU
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V5E8kDo2n6g (full version including Kozytsin part)
In English: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BbyZYgSXdyw
First known publication: 17 July 2014, 22:11 EEST (full version; a version without the Kozytsin conversation was issued at 21:41 EEST).

Salient details:

• One of the two corner stones of the “fatal mistake narrative”, which says the separatists shot down MH17 by mistake, thinking it was a Ukrainian freighter plane.

• The other cornerstone is the deliberate misinterpretation of the deletion of a Vk.com Strelkov_info message in which was reported “An AN-26 has been shot down near the mine Progress (…) We said, don’t fly in our sky!” The misrepresentation that commander-in-chief Igor Strelkov had deleted an implicit confession of his mistake in order to conceal evidence, was spread through the net within moments the admins of this site withdrew the message.
• This story, see [107] and [Ko2] for details, was backed-up by these confession taps, which the SBU released just a few hours later.

Problems:
• The video shows a manipulated information package, constructed by splicing and editing parts from intercepted calls to play out a story with the impression the separatist shot down MH17 by mistake and justified this when they realized they had done so.

• Actually, the parts which convey information about the downing of a plane, fit real events of the 16th. As these parts are glued to parts in which separatists are finding debris and bodies from the MH17 crash one day later, the impression is layed down both events had an immediate connection with each other. See also [108] and [109].

• Technical evaluation also shows this manipulation [110]. In the report by Micha Kobs ‘Haunt the Buk’ [Ko2, p. 7-11] more details of this fraudulent narrative are given.

• A forensic analysis done by Malaysian forensic specialist Akash Rosen, as shown in a documentary by Bonanza Media (from 14:00) [111], also showed tampering with these intercepts [112] – ie. parts that were allegedly intercepted with the same characters, actually showed different voices/people.

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[107] https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2015/06/12/myth-of-the-fatal-mistake-how-the-mh17-infowar-started/ and
https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2016/06/17/down-the-rabbit-hole-with-putin-haters-old-narative-fails-but-strelkov-did-it-anyway/ and
https://www.arnoldg.xyz/civilians-were-not-hurt/

[108] https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2015/10/24/writing-a-crime-play-and-showing-sbu-mh17-taps-are-frauds/


[110] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T34AB6CImTE

[111] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wkDWwYk4-Ho

[112] https://www.dropbox.com/s/o3s03aqzzz1g4pm3/Project-MH17-DigitalForensicsReporting-FinalV1.0-260519-Legal-Updated.pdf?dl=0
Salient detail:

- Information from these intercepted calls, released a day after the crash, seemed to have run in reports from Euromaydan (July 17, 13:15 EEST see section II), Ukrainian politician Dmitri Tymchuk (July 17, 20:19 EEST [113]), blogger Ukraine-at-war (July 17 [114]) and the SBU [July 19, 115]. All four suggested the Buk was transported in the Vostok convoy, as second-in-command of the DPR forces Khmuryi allegedly had ordered, according to these intercepts [Ko2].

- Most salient is of course that the Euromaydan posting was edited in realtime – at about midday on the 17th – to convey this message. Both Euromaydan and Tymchuk posted an old video from the Vostok battalion before the plane crashed to beef up the presence of separatist maneuvers. Maybe they mistakenly blended two strains of information together to get one big “terrorist convoy” transporting a Buk. Nonetheless it is remarkable the SBU kept peddling this story long time after the 17th.

Deputy commander of the DPR forces “Khmuryi” orders the Buk to go with the Vostok convoy after a call to Vostok subcommander San Sanych. However, on the 17th this convoy was already on its way to Marynivka at the time he issued an order to a minion to organize the transport. It could be these intercepts, very probably originating from an earlier date, were used as a focal point to spread rumours about a “big terrorist convoy” on the 17th, having a Buk in their midst.
Problems:

• Contents of the intercepted calls don’t make a consistent story together [Ko2, p. 12-19].

• Dating and timing seem to be flawed. When comparing pieces of information given in the taps with events known from other sources (news, social media reports) it is not possible to show this information corresponds to events from the morning of the 17th.

For example, Khmuryi mentions his group downed 2 planes the day before (Marynivka area) and two or “the second” that same day, the 17th. Researching records of lost armour, there are no two days in a row reported on which 2 planes each were downed by the separatists. When Khmuryi meant the day before yesterday instead of “yesterday”, then 14 July and 16 July show up as possibility. On both these days at least 2 planes were downed according to reports from separatists. Second, both official Ukrainian and separatist reports claimed that there were no sorties of Ukrainian planes at least until midday.

• So maybe the intercepts would have recorded the call after the late afternoon on the 16th, when a SU-25M was downed at Gregorievka at 16:55 EEST. Anyway, on the morning on the 17th – as the intercepts were timestamped by the SBU – neither one nor 2 planes were downed before the time when the conversations allegedly took place (9 AM). There weren’t even reported Ukrainian sorties in the morning of the 17th!

• Timing of the intercepts is flawed as Khmuryi seems to be calling at the same time (9:08 EEST) from two different places (Marynivka and Donetsk).

• Technical evaluation reveals manipulation [Ko2, p. 12-19].

[113] https://www.facebook.com/dmitry.tymchuk/posts/529275897201070
[115] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PWtH8AA42Fc from min. 2:40
Designation: **The Oreon taps**  
Site: Luhansk area, 14 July 2014  
Source: SBU  
URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVAOTWPmMM4&feature=youtu.be&t=39s](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MVAOTWPmMM4&feature=youtu.be&t=39s)  
First known publication: 18 July 2014

**Salient details:**

- Participants are Oleg Ivanovych Bugrov, deputy Minister for the Defense of the LPR and Oleg Vladimirovych Ivannikov aka Andrey Ivanovych Laptev, officer of the Main Directorate of the General Staff of the Russian Ministry of Defence (GRU). The identity of the latter was found by Bellingcat [116];

![Image](https://www.bellingcat.com/news/uk-and-europe/2018/05/25/mh17-russian-gru-commander-orion-identified-oleg-ivannikov/)

- The JIT spend a lot of effort to obtain the true identity of this GRU officer which begs the question if they have not the skills to research open source intelligence as Bellingcat seems to have.

- Oleg is talking from the Ukrainian "MTS" telecommunication company via mobile phone (38-050-645-64-69), as the taps convey. This is the same number that has been used to designate Alexander Khodakovsky, leader of battalion Vostok

**Problems**

- The GRU officer says: “We [sic] already have a Buk”. As this recording was intercepted on the 14th of July, it contends the official Buk story which claims the Buk drove into the Donbass in the night of 16-17 July.

- Despite the effort done, JIT did not indict Ivannikov in June 2019 along with the other four military men allegedly connected to a Buk transport into the Donbass.

- If the intercepts are genuine, the Ukrainian government would be accountable for knowing about Buk possession days before the downing on the 17th.

Designation: **The “Birdie comes to you” taps**  
Source: SBU  
URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emfVpkBkoow](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=emfVpkBkoow)  
First known publication: 25 July 2014

![Image of the Birdie taps video](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

**Salient detail:**

- Presumably published to bolster the fatal mistake narrative with subcommander Bezler as coordinator of the shooting. On June 19, 2019, JIT announced the indictment of 4 commanders. Bezler was not one of them.

**Problems:**

- According to the story played out here a spotter reported to subcommander Bezler that an airplane was on its way. Bezler then reported this allegedly down through the chain of command to the Buk crew. The only marker testifying this spotting would have had something to do with a wrong assessment concerning the 17 July events is that the video repeats a few times (with underscores) the call was intercepted 2 minutes before the crash, suggesting the plane actually seen was MH17. This would obviously corroborate the “fatal mistake narrative”.

However, we do not know if this really is the time captured, even more so when we review all the evidence handed over to the public by this source. An explanation might be this spotting originates from the 16th and is related to the July 16 downing of a SU-25 “behind Enakievo”, as reported in the Bezler-Geranin confession taps.

- This spotter would obviously have mixed up a freighter plane cruising at an altitude of 5 km and a speed of 450 km/h with a civilian plane at an altitude of 10 km, with a speed of 905 km/h. The fact that this narrative is founded on the tacit assumption the DPR would use a very incompetent spotter to rely their use of a high-potential war asset on, renders this story quite implausible.
• All the more if we take into account MH17 was hit – as is assumed from its last contact – at 16:20:03 EEST. The missile must have been flying 33 seconds to bridge the 26 km distance. Therefore launch was ignited at 16:19:30. This would mean the time for a decision and launch sequence through the chain of command was limited to 1 to 1:30 minutes at the most.

To decide a missile launch in this amount of time based on vague information (spotter says: “I can’t see behind the clouds. Too high.”) and knowledge of civilian planes flying over on a regular basis, seems too irrational to take serious.
Designation: **The missing crew member taps**
Site: Unspecified, allegedly intercepted on 17 July 2014, 21:32 EEST
Source: JIT (publishing agency), SBU (intercepting agency)
URL: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olQNpTxSnTo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olQNpTxSnTo) (from 5:35, Russian spoken with English subtitles)
First known publication: 30 March 2015

**Salient detail:**
- This conversation is part of a JIT call for witnesses.

> “Joint Investigation Team MH17 calls for witnesses transport & launch BUK. On July 17th 21.32 hrs. an intercepted phone call between separatists indicates that the BUK transport is located at a checkpoint and one of the crew members has been left behind. Can you provide details of this checkpoint or can you provide information regarding this missing crew member?”

**Problem:**
- The person addressed as commander (person A, who presumably is „Krot“ alias of Leonid Kharchenko) reacts surprised when his interlocutor mentions that it was a Buk launcher’s crew that lost its member – as if all panic about the downed passenger plane and its launcher was not immediately at the forefront in his mind. Is this intercepted call mistimed and/or misdated?

**B:** … (inaudible) a fighter has got lost there from this one… (inaudible) launcher. He has.. lost his crew, …(name blurred out)!
**A:** What a launcher?
**B:** From a Buk.
**A:** From a Buk???
(…)
Designation: The flight to Russia/Bibliothekar taps
Site: Unspecified
Source: JIT (publishing agency), SBU (intercepting agency)
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=olQNpTxSnTo (from 7:20, Russian spoken with English subtitles)
First known publication: 30 March 2015

Salient details:
• These intercepted calls have been published in the “call for witnesses” video made by the JIT, asking people only 9 months after the crash to come forward with testimonies confirming the standard fatal mistake narrative.

These calls would show troops in disarray after the downing, trying to get the murderweapon out of the area back to their Russian accomplices, even losing track of it! The intercepts show phrases like “yesterday there was a mess”, “... a disaster you know...” and “people were phoning in all the time” to convey a story of panic.

• This story, allegedly tapped on the morning of the 18th, would fit the narrative of the Luhansk video, the only existing account of a fleeing Buk allegedly on its way to the Russian border on the same morning.

• JIT chief Fred Westerbeke called these intercepts “authentic” and investigated “through and through”. While the people displayed in these calls probably are authentic voices from authentic DPR soldiers, this statement doesn't mention anything about alleged date and time reported by the SBU. (Moreover, one would expect the JIT to do some content analysis as well to sort out suggestion and interpretation from factual events!)

Intercepts shown in the 30 March 2015 “Call for witnesses” video, issued by the JIT. It seems commander Khmuryi lost track of “the car” (suggested: Buk) entirely.

Problems:
• The transscripts of the intercepted calls can not themselves reveal any hard information a
Buk transport was retoured to Russia. The only phrase alluding to a vehicle brought back to Russia is person B saying “The car is in Russia”, allegedly transported on a “lowboy” (as translated from Russian). However, we cannot verify this “car” is in fact a Buk transport.

- An important marker returning is the nickname of the alleged leader of the Buk transport, as retrieved from the Khmuryi/Motel taps, someone called “Bibliothekar”. This man allegedly was involved in bringing “the car” or “the vehicle” to a desired site in Russia. This way start and finish of the trail – Donetsk and Russia (via Luhansk) - are connected.

However, there are doubts about the veracity of the dating of the Khmuryi/Motel taps and about the Luhansk video as well. If these videos have been misdated, and it seems they have been, then the story of the 18.7 flight to Russia led by Bibliothekar loses all its support.

- Russia would even send a new “vehicle” under the wings of Bibliothekar, according to these intercepts (see min. 9:08). That would be really some news! The SBU allegedly saw them moving 5 units out of the Donbass in the night of the 17/18th, but in the morning the Russians would have decided already to bring in a brand new one. Or they meant a new “lowboy”, but then again, we know after the 17th the famous red low-loader was in operation business-as-usual in the Donbass at least until August. Anyway, there are as many interpretations as there are flavours.

- The only hard fact pointing to a valid degree of suspicion is the alleged date and time of the intercepts, namely in the early morning of the 18th. This serves as a potential focal point to construct suggestive information around, like was done in the “Birdie” video. Then looking at the contents of these intercepts it is understandable the anti-Russian public is interpreting the events as causally related to the MH17 crash and the official narrative of a Buk flight to Russia.

Bibliothekar would have brought back a new vehicle (suggested: Buk) after he returned the Kursk Buk back to Russia.
• But even without uncertainty about the dating, which is obviously there as other intercepts like the Bezler confession tapes seem to have been misdated by the SBU as well, the story played out here needn’t have anything to do with MH17.

Second in command Khmuryi ordered the Buk to go with Vostok. At 9:54 EEST he gives instructions how to proceed. At that time convoy Vostok was already on its way as can be calculated by shadowcasting analysis performed to a video from Vostok made in Makiivka that day [Ko2]. “Bibliothekar”, also mentioned in the Get-away taps, was waiting to move “you know what is there”, a phrase everyone can interpret as (s)he pleases.

• Conclusion should be at this time that these intercepts do not contain evidence of the purported course of events as interpretation is routed to a standing narrative by using the inclination of people to fit suggestive pieces of information to a known collection of data. Content and technical analysis of the taps could be done more thoroughly, but will imho only lead to finding more irregularities.
Designation: Khmuryi orders the Buk at Sanych’s taps
Site: DPR area, Marynivka or Donetsk, intercept dated at 16 July 2014
Source: JIT, intercepted by SBU
URL: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=94LF4sg14Zc
First known publication: 28 September 2016

Salient details:
• Participants are second in command of DPR forces Sergey Dubinski aka “Khmuryi” and
deputy of Vostok commander Khodakovski, subcommander “(San) Sanych”.

• Dubinski and first in command Igor Strelkov were very critical regarding the actions of
battalion “Vostok”, a group of fighters coming from nations bordering the east, mostly from
Chechenia and Ossetia. According to the first two commanders of the DPR parts of Vostok
were implicated in extortion and black marketeering and served as a vehicle for the personal
political ambitions of former local SBU boss Khodakovski [117]. At a time before the crash
troops of Vostok even got into fighs with Dubinski’s men in Donetsk. Strelkov even declared
afterwards he would have dismanteled the battalion if he would have had the man- and
gunpower to do it.

• Official story is Khmuryi, commander of troops pounded by SUs and GRADs at Marynivka,
orders a Buk and Sanych is vowing to deliver it (Sanych was poised to lead a convoy of
three tanks and a armoured truck Ural from Donetsk to Marynivka at the 17th):

  Khmuryi: “If I can receive a Buk in the morning and can send it over there that would be
  good. (…) If not, things will go totally fucked up.”

  Sanych: “Well, look Nikolayevich… If you need it… we’ll send it over… to your area.”

• Khmuryi conveys uncertainly about the delivery of a Buk.

• Last words of the call heard, but not transcripted, shows probably something of the
animosity between DPR forces led by Dubinski and Vostok. A “joke” with an underlying
meaning:

  “If this [presumably refers to Sanych offer; HR] is what I am thinking, I will shoot you
down.” [118]

Problems:
• Obviously the contents of what is being said have been misrepresented by the JIT. Probably
Sanych is offering his willingness to help, that in case Khmuryi actually would get hold of a
Buk, to accompany it to Marynivka with his column. Then the “it” from “If you need it”, as
Sanych spoke, refers to the sending, not to the Buk. If you need sending, we could take care.

• Seen in the light of animosity and the last not transcripted words by Khmuryi it is not
credible the commanders of the DPR forces would ever let Vostok get hold of a high-valued
war asset like a Buk missile system. Moreover, taken into account his subordinate position
acting as a commander of a column of non-Russian auxiliary forces, it’s not very probable
that Sanych would have the power to arrange at short notice a high-value war asset at the
general’s office in Russia – or even, as is suggested, to come up with a Russian Buk himself.
• The Khmuryi/Motel intercepts allegedly showed that Khmuryi orders “that beauty” to go with Vostok. He called Sanych again at 9:22 and asked for the site where to bring the vehicle. Half an hour later Vostok left without the Buk, that was apparently still standing at the crossroads of Ilycha Avenue and Shakhtrostroy Avenue or at the site where it allegedly was filmed by the person who provided Paris Match.

• Why was the Buk brought to Donetsk to drive to Makiivka back again by another road to finally end up south from Snizhne, when it als could have driven from Luhansk via Krasnyi Luch to Snizhne or – as it allegedly also went back to Russia – from Luhansk via Debaltseve and Krasny Luch – to Snizhne?

Salient details:

- This package shows 5 intercepted conversations in which "Oreon" is featured. In the four Notes of Suspicion that the Ukrainian judiciary published on the four soldiers that were indicted in the MH17 case on June 19, 2019, it is claimed Oreon was deputy of Delfin, commissioned to coordinate tasks concerning a joint LPR/DPR facility for collecting arms from Russia.

- In Conversation 1 Oreon acts as person B. Most interesting thing that is said, is showed in the last line: "... control posts/command vehicles shall not be moved at crucial battle moments...". Of course, a complete Buk battery also contains a command vehicle, so maybe this line should set us on track a Buk is involved and why only a TELAR was sent.

- In Conversation 2 Oreon acts as person A, that says: "I have arranged everything on the lowboy and a crane." and "I have arranged it for the evening. ...[inaudible] it ...[inaudible] at/for around 5-6". His interlocutor [Delfin] gives directions: "It has to be loaded, camouflaged and driven away." Of course, this would fit the story of the netted Buk that was loaded on the red lowloader hauled by a unique truck to be transported to Pervomais'kyi.

- In Conversation 3 Oreon acts as person B. A signalling line is that his interlocutor mentions that: "We weren’t waiting for the escort. We are heading to Snezhnoye". Possibly this suggests this conversation has something to do with the story that the Buk was ordered to be escorted by the Vostok convoy, as is displayed in the Khmuryi/Motel intercepts, but eventually went alone, escorted by only two cars. However, it was the other way around. Vostok did not wait for the Buk.

- Other lines concern the exact settlement where to this particular convoy is headed and if „our comrade“ is aware of it.

- In Conversation 4 Oreon acts as person A. The conversations signals a Ukrainian convoy in the direction of the airport from the west through Sabivka, a town west from Luhansk.

- In Conversation 5 Oreon acts as person C. Apparently he responds to a question from person B who wants to know from where „the convoy“ is coming. "I don’t know where it is going from. It’s from west, isn’t it?" (…) "Ok. Well, if they come in the airport, will fight at the airport. What else can we do?"
Problems:

- Dates of the interceptions are unknown.

- Conversations 4 and 5 seem to pivot around an Ukrainian convoy that was driving towards the airdome of Luhansk, where heavy fighting took place during mid July. There does not seem to be any relation with the MH17 case.

- The first three conversations suggest to concern the organisation of the Buk transport when we use this narrative as a preconceived story for interpreting these conversations.

- In Conversation 2, the time of the delivery of what is loaded with a crane on a lowloader – around 5 in the evening - does not match the events from the official Buk narrative. According to a statement by SBU counter-intel chief Viktor Nayda and the Notes of Suspicion on Igor Girkin the Buk crossed the state border at 1 AM and moved from Krasnodon at 4:28 in the morning.

For these purposes, during the night of 16 to 17 July 2014 the 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade’s BUK TELAR, side number 3X2, was illegally transported across the state border between Ukraine and the Russian Federation along the following route: Donetsk (Rostov Region, the RF) - Severny (Luhansk Region) – Sorokine (former Krasnodon, Luhansk Region).

This having been the case, for its security, the side number 3X2 of the RF 53rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Brigade’s BUK TELAR was completely painted over in order to conceal the presence of the RF Armed Forces military equipment in Ukraine.

Later, the BUK TELAR mentioned above was delivered with a "Volvo" cargo trailer along with its crew and escorted by militants of the DPR terrorist organization to Donetsk via the following route: Sorokine (former Krasnodon, Luhansk Region) - Molodohvardiysk - Khraischchuvate - Luhansk - Perevalsk - Debaltseve - Vuhlehirsk - Yenakiieve - Zhdanivka - Nyzhnia Krynka – Khartsyzk - Makiivka – Donetsk (Donetsk Region, Ukraine) within the period from 04:28 to 09:07 on 17 July 2014.

Screengrab from the Note of Suspicion on Igor Girkin, June 19, 2019, p.5. After the numbers 3_2 were painted over partly, the Buk allegedly left Krasnodon on 4:28 local time.
**Designation:** Kharchenko-Oleg (alleged Buk driver) taps
**Site:** Somewhere allegedly west from Snizhne, intercept timed at 17 July 2014, 13:09 EEST
**Source:** JIT, intercepted by SBU
**URL:** [https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-vliegramp/presentaties/presentation-joint/](https://www.om.nl/onderwerpen/mh17-vliegramp/presentaties/presentation-joint/)
(from 7:35)
**First known publication:** 28 September 2016

**Salient details:**

- Participant (“Lonia” or Lyonya, callname of Leonid Kharchenko) allegedly gives directions to the Buk crew to go from Stepaninka (with a “N”) to the right. However, there is no hamlet, village or quarter known named Stepaninka. Actually, Stepanivka (with a “V”) is meant, a village south from Snizhne.

- Remarkable is that the participant giving directions (Lonia) appoints to Snizhne, as if he hardly knows this place, which is kind of large and has some 50,000 inhabitants. Also Bellingcat noticed, though they mixed-up participants to suggest alien (obviously Russian) presence in the Buk crew (see image below).

> **So, go to Snizhne.**
> I’ll give you further directions there.
> **Got it. Ok.**

It seems that the driver was unfamiliar with the area, and even with the town of Snizhne—one of the larger cities in the area. Judging by his reaction regarding “this fucking what’s it...this fucking Snizhne,” it is fair to assume he is not a local.
Problems:

- The intercepted call is timed at 13:09 local time. Deduction from the statements made by the participant allegedly pointing the Buk crew to move to Snizhne first, leads to the conclusion the Buk was west from Snizhne at that moment in time. This leads to more problems with the alleged timeline of the Buk tour through Snizhne (see also my blogpost [119])

- Contents of the conversation displayed are incomprehensible and illogical, as the participant allegedly belonging to the Buk crew gets clues in the opposite direction with respect to the way he should have proceeded if he wanted to reach the alleged launch site. The crew is directed to go from Stepanivka to the right towards “this fucking Snizhne” whereas the Buk route would entail a direction from Snizhne towards the south (“last checkpoint leaving Snizhne” towards Stepanivka). See image below.

- In 2019 Bellingcat implicitly confirms the assessment about the direction [120]:

  The directions that Lyonya gives suggest that Oleg is approaching him from the frontlines near Marynivka/Dmytrivka, southeast of Stepanivka.

However, they don’t discuss this conclusion and its implications – that this conversation is not about a Buk and JIT is implicated in this fraud - and continue to follow the official story (see screengrab from the article below).
The JIT noted that one of the participants’ mobile phone was connected to a telephone tower in-between Pervomayske and Pervomayskyy, which was the closest telephone tower to the eventual launch site. They did not specify which of the two persons this was, but considering that Lyonka is the one giving directions, it seems that he was already close to the launch location while Oleg was heading his way. The directions that Lyonka gives suggest that Oleg is approaching him from the frontlines near Marynivka/Dmytrivka, southeast of Stepniivka. In Ukraine’s application concerning their case against Russia, submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on 12 June 2018, the call between Lyonka and Oleg is also mentioned, but the two men are instead referred to by the call signs “Krot” (Mole) and “Zmey” (Serpant).223


- For the MH17 related evidence as displayed in the formal complaint of Ukraine against the Russian Federation at the International Criminal Court, see below [121]:

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[121] For Annex 391, see https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eGtimRXwDBQ and my view on it https://hectorreban.wordpress.com/2019/07/21/jit-presser-target-is-kremlin/