
Russia to veto MH17 tribunal draft at UN Security Council

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The Russian president explained to Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte why Russia would not support the establishment of a tribunal into the downing of Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 in a phone call, the Kremlin said.

Moscow opposed the draft document submitted by Malaysia and supported by several nations, including The Netherlands and Ukraine, saying that its description of the tragedy as a threat to international security is a strained interpretation meant to subject it to the council's authority.

"We believe it is not in the UN charter. The UN Security Council is not supposed to deal with issues like this," Russian UN envoy Vitaly Churkin said, adding that Russia would veto the document.

The Security Council ordered creation of special tribunals to tackle several cases, including war crimes committed during the Balkan wars and the genocide in Rwanda. But Russia believes it would be wrong to treat the MH17 downing differently from other similar incidents with civilian aircraft, such as the downing of Iran Air flight 655 by the US in 1988 or the downing of Korean Air Lines flight 007 by Soviet Union in 1983. The call for a tribunal is confrontational, Moscow believes.

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An alternative draft resolution proposed by Russia and seen by RT called for more transparency in the ongoing investigation of the MH17 incident by the Dutch authorities. It also criticized UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon for a failure to appoint a special representative to tackle the case.

Malaysia Airlines flight MH17 was shot down on July 21 as it was flying over a war zone, where Ukrainian armed forces were fighting against rebels, who rejected the new government imposed by an armed coup in Kiev. The tragedy has been the subject of much speculation, with Kiev and its foreign sponsors accusing the rebels of taking down the plane with a Russia-supplied missile.

The rebels rejected the accusations and blamed the Ukrainian army for the downing. Moscow denied supplying anti-aircraft missiles to the rebels and made public evidence of Ukrainian military activities in the area.

A preliminary report by the Dutch investigators in September 2014 confirmed that the Boeing airliner was taken down by an outside force, but did not indicate which side could have carried out such an attack even what kind of weapon was used. The final report is still being completed.
