

Iran's accidental downing of a Ukrainian plane is already being used to smear MH-17 skeptics

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When the Pentagon confirmed the assassination of Iranian Major General Qasem Soleimani, U.S. President Donald Trump took to social media to post a single image of the American flag to the adulation of his followers. Unfortunately, most Americans are ignorant of the other flag synonymous with U.S. foreign policy, that of the 'false flag' utilized to deceive the public and stir up support for endless war abroad. While the chicken hawk defenders of Trump's reckless decision to murder one of the biggest contributors in the defeat of ISIS salivated over possible war with Iran, their appetite was spoiled by Tehran's retaliatory precision strikes of two U.S. bases in Iraq that deliberately avoided casualties while in accordance with the Islamic Republic's right to self defense under Article 51 of the United Nations charter. The reprisal successfully deescalated the crisis but sent a clear message Iran was willing to stand up to the U.S. with the backing of Russia and China, while Washington underestimated Tehran which forewarned the Iraqi government of its impending counterattack so U.S. personnel could evacuate.

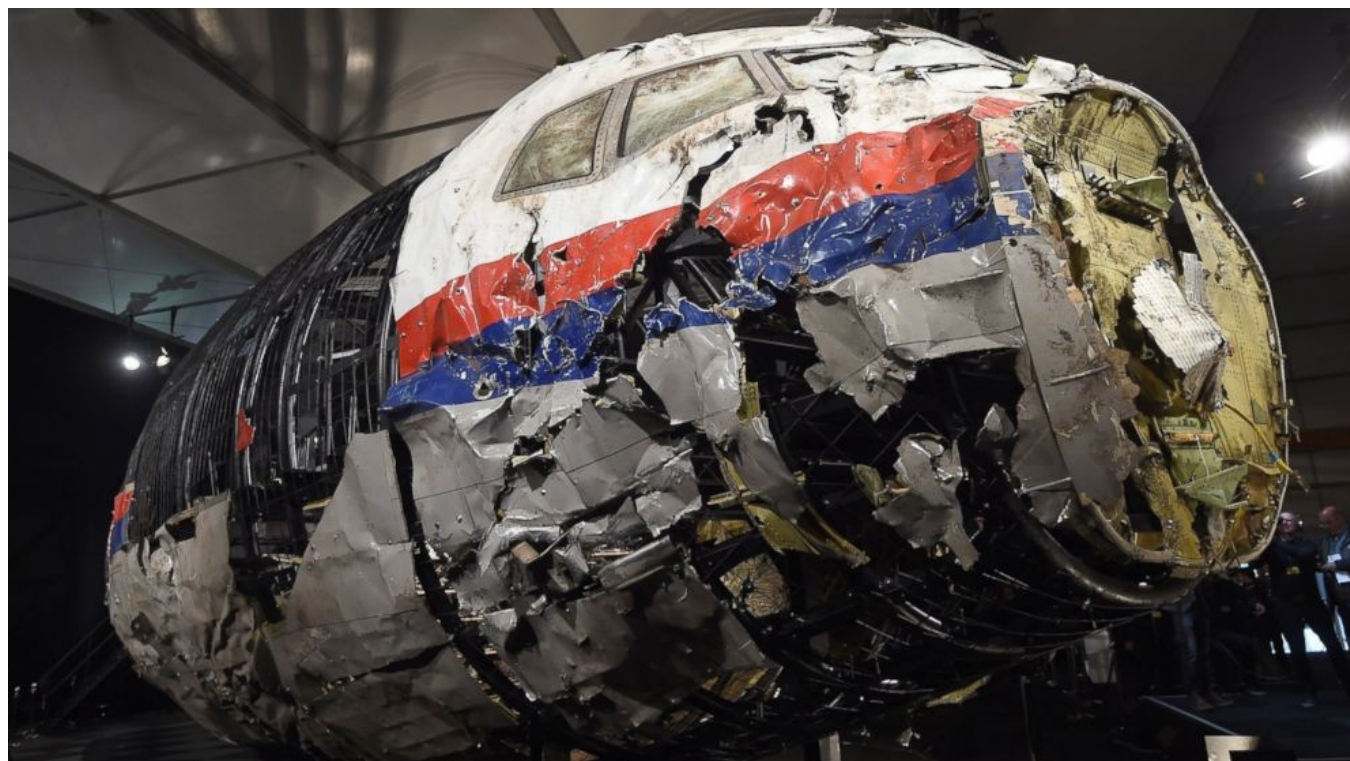
In the hours following the ballistic missile strikes, reports came in that a Boeing 737 international passenger flight scheduled from Tehran to Kiev, Ukraine had crashed shortly after takeoff from Imam Khomeini International Airport, killing all 176 passengers and flight crew on board. Initial video of the crash of Ukrainian International Airlines Flight 752 (PS752) showed that the aircraft was already in flames while descending to the ground, leading to speculation it was shot down amid the heightened political crisis between Iran and Washington. In the days following, a second obscure video surfaced which only increased this suspicion. Meanwhile, Western governments quickly concluded that an anti-aircraft surface-to-air missile brought PS752 down and were eager to point the finger at Iran before any formal investigation. Many people, including this author, were admittedly skeptical as to how a plane taking off from Tehran could have been mistaken five hours after the strikes in Iraq.

Nevertheless, those with reservations turned out to be wrong when days later the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) came clean that its aerospace forces made a "human error" and accidentally shot the passenger plane down after mistaking it for a incoming cruise missile when it flew close to a military base during a heightened state of alert in anticipation of U.S. attack. Many have noted that Iran's honorable decision to take responsibility for the catastrophe is in sharp contrast with Washington's response in 1988 when the U.S. Navy shot down Iran Air Flight 655 scheduled from Tehran to Dubai over the Strait of Hormuz in the Persian Gulf, killing all 290 occupants, after failing to cover it up. Just a month later, Vice President George H.W. Bush would notoriously state he would "*never apologize for the United States of America. Ever. I don't care what the facts are.*" Although he was not directly referring to the incident, one can only imagine what the reaction would be if Iranian President Hassan Rouhani were to say the same weeks after shooting down the Ukrainian plane, let alone an American one. Predictably, Tehran's transparency has gone mostly unappreciated while the Trump administration is already trying to use the disaster to further demonize Iran.

Oddly enough, Ukrainian International Airlines is partly owned by the infamous Ukrainian-Israeli oligarch, politician and energy tycoon Igor Kolomoisky, who was notably one of the biggest financiers of the anti-Russian, pro-EU coup d'etat which overthrew the democratically elected government of Viktor Yanukovich in 2014. Kolomoisky is also a principal backer of current Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky whose dubious phone call with Trump resulted in the 45th U.S. president's impeachment last month. In another astounding coincidence, Kolomoisky's Privat Group is believed to control Burisma Holdings, the Cypress-based company whose executive board 2020 presidential candidate Joe Biden's son Hunter was appointed to following the Maidan junta. The former Vice President admitted that he bribed Ukraine into firing its top prosecutor who was looking into his son's corruption by threatening to withhold \$1 billion in loan guarantees.

Kolomoisky, AKA "the Chameleon", is one of the wealthiest people in the ex-Soviet country and was formerly appointed as governor of an administrative region bordering Donbass in eastern Ukraine following the 2014 putsch. He has also funded a battalion of volunteer neo-Nazi mercenaries fighting alongside the Ukrainian army in the War in Donbass against Russian-speaking separatists which the military aid temporarily withheld by the Trump administration that was disputably contingent upon an investigation of Biden and his son goes to. In 2014, another infamous plane shootdown made international headlines when Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 (MH17) scheduled from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur was shot down over the breakaway Donetsk People's Republic (DPR) in eastern Ukraine, killing all 298 passengers and crew.

From the get-go, the Obama administration was adamant that the missile which shot down the Boeing 777 came from separatist rebel territory. However, Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir bin Mohamad denounced the charges brought against the Russian and Ukrainian nationals indicted in the NATO-led investigation, dismissing the entire probe as a politically motivated effort predetermined to scapegoat Moscow and exclude Malaysian participation in the inquiry from the very beginning. Mohamad is featured in the excellent [documentary MH17: Call for Justice](#) made by a team of independent journalists which contests the NATO-scripted narrative and reveals that the Buk missile was more likely launched from Ukrainian Army-controlled territory than the DPR. One of Kolomoisky's hired guns could also have been responsible.



Shamefully, Iran's admission of guilt in the PS752 downing is [already being used](#) by establishment propagandists to discredit skeptics and conflated with similar contested past events like MH17 in order to intimidate dissenting voices from speaking up in the future. The Bellingcat 'investigative journalism' collective which made its name incriminating Moscow for the MH17 tragedy are the principle offenders. Bellingcat bills itself as an 'independent' citizen journalism group even though its founder Eliot Higgins is employed by the Atlantic Council think tank which receives funding from NATO, the U.S. State Department, the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), George Soros' Open Society Foundation NGO, and numerous other regime change factories. Despite its enormous conflict of interest, Bellingcat remains highly cited by corporate media as a supposedly reputable source. At the outset, nearly everything about the PS752 tragedy gave one déjà vu of the MH17 disaster, including the rush to judgement by Western governments, so it was only natural for many to distrust the official narrative until more facts came out.

None of this changes that the use of commercial passenger jets as false flag targets for U.S. national security subterfuge is a verifiable historical fact, not a 'conspiracy theory.' In 1997, the U.S. National Archives declassified a 1962 [memo](#) proposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Department of Defense for then-Secretary of State Robert McNamara entitled "*Justification for U.S. Military Intervention in Cuba.*" The document outlined a series of 'false flag' terrorist attacks, codenamed Operation Northwoods, to be carried out on a range of targets and blamed on the Cuban government to give grounds for an invasion of Havana in order to depose Fidel Castro. These scenarios included targets within the U.S., in particular Miami, Florida, which had become a haven of right-wing émigrés and defectors following the Cuban Revolution. In addition to the sinking of a Cuban refugee boat, one Northwoods plan included the staging of attacks on a civilian jet airliner and a U.S. Air Force plane to be pinned on Castro's government:

"8. It is possible to create an incident which will demonstrate convincingly that a Cuban aircraft has attacked and shot down a chartered civil airliner enroute from the United States to Jamaica, Guatemala, Panama or Venezuela. The destination would be chosen only to cause the flight plan route to cross Cuba. The passengers could be a group of college students off on a holiday or any grouping of persons with a common interest to support chartering a non-scheduled flight.

9. It is possible to create an incident which will make it appear that Communist Cuban MIGs have destroyed a USAF aircraft over international waters in an unprovoked attack."

Although Operation Northwoods was rejected by then-U.S. President John F. Kennedy which many believe was a factor in his subsequent assassination, Cuban exiles with the support of U.S. intelligence would later be implicated in such an attack the following decade with the bombing of Cubana Airlines Flight 455 in 1976 which killed all 73 passengers and crew on board. In 2005, [documents](#) released by the National Security Archive showed that the CIA under then-director George H.W. Bush had advanced knowledge of the plans of a Dominican Republic-based Cuban exile terrorist organization, the Coordination of United Revolutionary Organizations (CORU), at the direction of former CIA operative Luis Posada Carriles to blow up the airliner. The U.S. later refused to extradite Carriles to Cuba to face charges and although he never admitted to masterminding the bombing of the jet, he publicly confessed to other attacks on tourist hotels in Cuba during the 1990s and was later arrested in 2000 for attempting to blow up an auditorium in Panama trying to assassinate Castro.

In 1962, the planners of Operation Northwoods concluded that such deceptive operations would shift U.S. public opinion unanimously against Cuba.

"World opinion and the United Nations forum should be favorably affected by developing the international image of Cuban government as rash and irresponsible, and as an alarming and unpredictable threat to the peace of the Western Hemisphere."

The same talking points are used by the U.S. government to demonize Iran today. Initially, some Western intelligence sources also [concluded](#) that it was a malfunction or overheated engine that brought PS752 down in corroboration with the Iranian government's original explanation until the narrative abruptly shifted the following day. That they were so quick to hold Iran accountable without

any investigation gave the apparent likelihood that PS752 could have fallen prey to a Northwoods-style false flag operation designed to further isolate Iran and defame its leaders after they took precautions to avoid U.S. casualties in their retaliatory strikes for the killing of Soleimani. Maintaining the image of Iran as a nefarious regime is crucial in justifying hawkish U.S. policies toward the country and Iran's noted restraint in its retaliation put a dent in that impression, so many were suspicious and rightly so.

It was also entirely plausible that U.S. special operations planners could have consulted the Northwoods playbook replacing Cuba with Iran and the right-wing gusanos who were to assist the staged attacks in Miami with the Iranian opposition group known as Mujahedin e-Khalq (MEK/People's Mujahedin of Iran) to do the same in Tehran. In July of last year, Trump's personal lawyer and former New York City Mayor Rudolph Giuliani gave a paid speech at the cult-like group's compound in Albania where he not only referred to the group as Iran's "government-in-exile" but [stated](#) the U.S.'s explicit intentions to use them for regime change in Iran. The MEK enjoys high level contacts in the Trump administration and the group was elated at his decision to murder Soleimani in Baghdad.

From 1997 until 2012, the MEK was on the State Department's list of terrorist organizations until it was removed by the Obama administration after its expulsion from Iraq in order to relocate the group to fortified bases in Albania and the NATO protectorate of Kosovo. The latter disputed territory is a perfect fit for the rebranded group having been founded by another deregistered foreign terrorist organization, the al-Qaeda linked Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA), whose leader, Hashim Thaçi, presides over the partially-recognized state. The MEK are no longer designated as such despite the State Department's [own account](#) of its bloody history:

"During the 1970s, the MEK staged terrorist attacks inside Iran to destabilize and embarrass the Shah's regime; the group killed several US military personnel and civilians working on defense projects in Tehran. The group also supported the takeover in 1979 of the US Embassy in Tehran. In April 1992 the MEK carried out attacks on Iranian embassies in 13 different countries, demonstrating the group's ability to mount large-scale operations overseas."

Declassified documents revealing the sinister plans in Operation Northwoods which shockingly made it all the way to the desk of the president of the United States and the foreknowledge of Cubana Airlines Flight 455 are just two examples of solid proof that false flag attacks against civilian passenger planes are a part of the Pentagon's modus operandi as disclosed in its own archives and there is no reason to believe that such practices have been discontinued. That the U.S. is still cozy with "former" terror groups like MEK seeking to repatriate is good reason to believe its use of militant exiles for covert operations like those from Havana has not been retired. If there were jumps to conclusions that proven serial liars could be looking for an excuse to stage an attack to lay the blame on Iran, it is only because the distinct probability was overwhelming. Even so, a stopped clock strikes the right time twice per day and that is *all* Iran's acknowledgment of its liability proves — that even the world's most unreliable and criminal sources in Washington and Langley can be accurate sometimes, even if by accident. Stay skeptical.

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