

The Canberra times. – 07.03.2020 Canberra

## **Dutch MH17 trial to start without suspects**

*Голландський суд щодо збиття MH17 розпочнеться без підозрюваних*

*У Нідерландах 9 березня розпочнеться судовий процес щодо перших чотирьох підозрюваних у справі щодо збиття ракетою російського виробництва літака рейсу MH17 в липні 2014 р. Серед загиблих 298 пасажирів та екіпажу - у тому числі 38 громадян Австралії. В разі не явки підозрюваних суд готовий заочно вести процес у справі MH17.*

<https://www.canberratimes.com.au/story/6666939/dutch-mh17-trial-to-start-without-suspects/?cs=14232>

Four fugitive suspects go on trial in the Netherlands on Monday charged with the murder of 298 passengers and crew - including 38 Australian citizens and residents - onboard Malaysia Airlines Flight 17, shot down with a Russian-made missile over eastern Ukraine in July 2014.

Wreckage of the Boeing 777 fell into fields surrounding the Ukrainian village of Hrabove in territory held by pro-Russian separatists fighting Ukrainian government forces.

It was flying from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur when it was hit by a surface-to-air missile. There were no survivors.

Arrest warrants were issued last year for three Russians and a Ukrainian identified by a Dutch-led Joint Investigation Team (JIT) which spent several years collecting evidence.

The four - Russians Sergey Dubinsky, Oleg Pulatov and Igor Girkin, and Ukrainian Leonid Kharchenko - had senior positions in the pro-Russian militias in eastern Ukraine in 2014.

The JIT said they had not pulled the trigger but colluded to carry out the attack.

Girkin, a vocal and battle-hardened Russian nationalist, was minister of defence in the self-declared Donetsk People's Republic (DNR) in Ukraine.

Dubinsky, Pulatov and Kharchenko were members of the separatists' military intelligence unit.

The defendants are at large and are not expected to show up for the hearings at a high-security courtroom near Amsterdam's Schiphol airport where they will be prosecuted under Dutch law.

If they do not appear, or fail to send lawyers, the judges could rule that the trial be held in absentia.

They also face preliminary allegations of obtaining a missile launcher with the intent to bring down an aircraft.

Russia has consistently denied any involvement or providing financial or military support to pro-Russian rebels in Ukraine.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said the Kremlin would wait to see how the trial panned out before commenting, but said Russia had always had doubts about the objectivity of the Dutch-led investigation.

"The court will conduct its work independently," Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte told journalists in The Hague on Friday.

"This is a very important step toward uncovering the truth and seeking justice for the victims and their survivors."

Rutte said the trial would most likely not be the end of the legal process because: "The investigation into the involvement of other individuals is ongoing."

The JIT includes judicial authorities from Australia, Malaysia, Belgium and Ukraine, in addition to Dutch police and prosecutors.