Beat: News

Missile Used Most Likely BUK or Similar, Says Expert

MH17 Crash

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USPA NEWS - PETALING JAYA, July 18 - The surface-to-air missile (SAM) system suspected to have caused the crash of Malaysia Airlines (MAS) flight MH17 is most likely the Soviet-designed BUK, and not a shoulder-fired missile.

According to a CNN report quoting military analyst Rick Francona, the shoulder-fired missiles used by rebels and separatist groups could be ruled out as these weapons do not have the ability to reach 30,000 feet, the altitude at which MH17 was flying when all contact was lost with it on Thursday night The former United States Air Force lieutenant colonel said that such man-portable missiles could at best only reach 15,000 feet. "This would indicate a surface-to-air missile or an air-to-air missile, and I think a surface-to-air missile is probably the best guess right now," he said, adding that such SAM systems like the BUK would be in the arsenal of Russian forces on the other side of the Ukrainian border.

Francona said that the BUK would be more than capable of shooting down an aircraft travelling at 30,000 feet. MH17 disappeared from radar screens in eastern Ukraine at around 1415 GMT, hours after the Boeing 777, bound for Kuala Lumpur, had taken off from Amsterdam's Schiphol airport. The Boeing 777 is believed to have been accidentally shot down 50km from the Ukraine-Russia border. The CNN report also quotes Retired Brigadier General Kevin Ryan, director of the Defence and Intelligence Project at the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University as saying that the BUK, known as the SA-11 to Nato forces is operated by both the Russian and Ukrainian military.

However, Ryan said it was unlikely that the missile was fired by pro-Russia separatists due to the sophistication of the BUK system. "It takes a lot of training and a lot of coordination to fire one of these and hit something.This is not the kind of weapon a couple of guys are going to pull out of a garage and fire," he said, concluding that if MH17 was shot down, a professional military force was responsible. Similar views were shared by IHS Janes Americas editor Dan Wasserbly, who said a BUK battery would consist of several vehicles “ “ a command post vehicle, a radar vehicle, several self-propelled launchers, loader vehicles and even more vehicles to carry new missiles to the batteries as necessary.

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