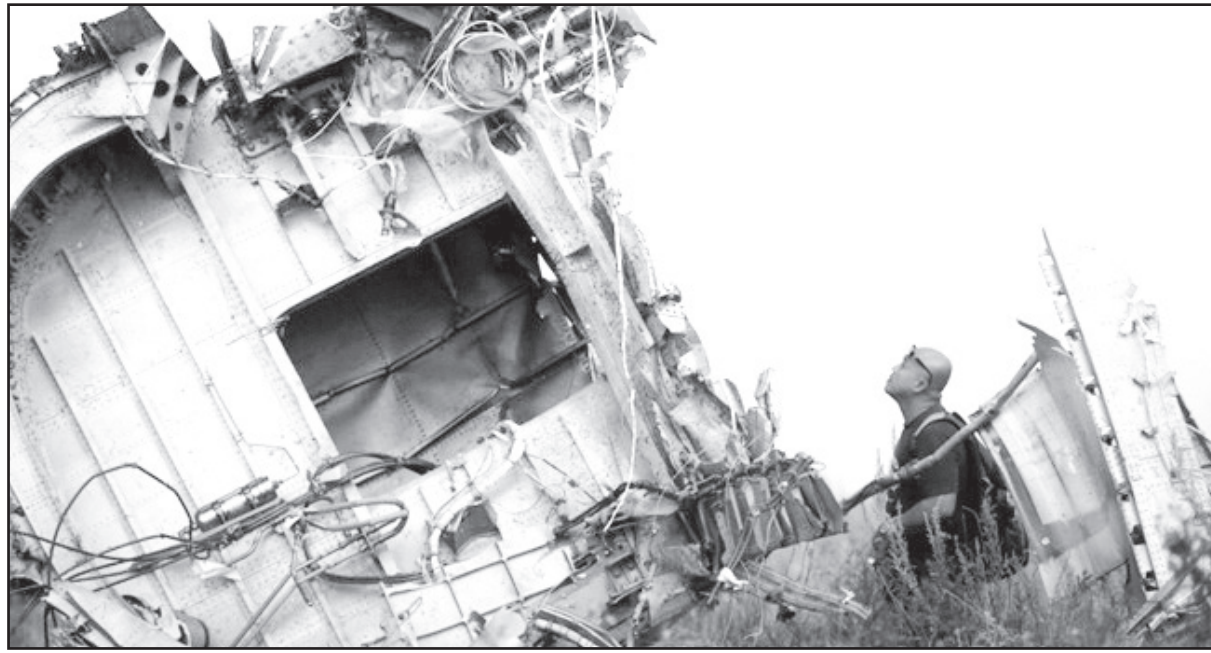


# Ukraine Rebels Deny Downing Flight MH17, Reject Probe Findings



A Malaysian air crash investigator inspects the crash site of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, near the village of Hrabove (Grabovo) in Donetsk region, Ukraine, July 22, 2014.

MOSCOW/KIEV, Ukraine (Daily Star) - A top pro-Russian separatist commander in eastern Ukraine Wednesday denied Dutch findings blaming the downing of Flight MH17 on a Russian missile fired from rebel-held territory.

"The forces of the People's Republic of Donetsk could not have fired at the plane from a BUK system because we have no such sort of weapons," general Eduard Basurin of the self-proclaimed republic told AFP.

A criminal inquiry in the Netherlands found Wednesday that the missile that shot the Malaysia Airlines Boeing 777 out of the sky was snuck out of and back into Russia.

The investigators also confirmed that the missile that slammed into the plane was fired from a field in a part of eastern Ukraine under the control of the separatists at the time.

Earlier Wednesday, Moscow described the investigation as "biased" and "politically motivated."

"Russia is disappointed that the situation around the investigation of the Boeing catastrophe is not changing," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement, adding: "The conclusions ... confirm that the investigation is biased and politically motivated."

But the Dutch-led investigation did not directly accuse Moscow of supplying the BUK missile and its transporter system.

The passenger jet was shot down in July 2014 on its way from Amsterdam to Kuala Lumpur.

The incident came at the most heated point in the war, straining tensions between the West and Moscow even further.

# China Urges Pakistan, India to Solve Differences Over Disputed Kashmir

BEIJING (Dispatches) - China on Wednesday called on Pakistan and India to solve their differences over Kashmir, as tensions mount between the nuclear-armed neighbors after an attack killed 18 Indian soldiers in the disputed Himalayan region.

China "hopes that Pakistan and India will strengthen channels for dialogue, appropriately handle any differences, improve bilateral relations and together protect the region's piece and stability", a deputy foreign minister told Pakistan's special envoys to China for Kashmir, according to the foreign ministry website.

The deputy minister, Liu Zhenmin, also told the envoys that China values Pakistan's position on Kashmir.

Bangladesh announced Wednesday that it will not participate in a meeting of

South Asian nations in Pakistan in November, following the withdrawal of India, the largest member of the regional bloc, a day earlier.

State Minister for Foreign Affairs M. Shahriar Alam gave no reason for Bangladesh's decision other than his country's "domestic engagements."

Diplomatic tensions between Bangladesh and Pakistan have escalated in recent years, with each government summoning the other's top diplomat over Bangladesh's execution of people convicted of involvement in its 1971 war of independence from Pakistan.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi was scheduled to attend the eight-nation summit in the Pakistani capital. The other member states are Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.



CANBERRA (Reuters) - Severe storms and thousands of lightning strikes knocked out power to the entire state of South Australia on Wednesday, authorities said, leading to port closures and commuter chaos.

South Australia is the country's fifth most populous state, with 1.7 million people and Adelaide as its capital, and is a major wine producer and traditional manufacturing hub.

The Bureau of Meteorology said a vigorous cold front was moving across the state with an intense low pressure system due on Thursday.

"We'll have gale force winds and large seas (across the south of the country); also heavy rain and thunderstorms, which will lead to renewed river rises," it said on its website.

SA Power Networks said repairs to its transmission network were underway.

\*\*\*\*\*

TEHRAN (FNA) - The United States intends to deploy the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) anti-missile system in South Korea "as soon as possible," a senior U.S. official said.

"Given the accelerating pace of North Korea (Democratic People's Republic of Korea)'s missile tests, we intend to deploy on an accelerated basis -- I would say as soon as possible," Daniel Russel, U.S. assistant secretary of state, told a hearing held by the Asia Pacific subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Xinhua reported.

The senior official did not provide the timeline of the deployment, saying that "perhaps our colleagues in the Defense Department and the Republic of Korea" can comment on the timeline.

Russel also said that the THAAD system is "a defensive measure aimed not at China, but at North Korea (DPRK)."

\*\*\*\*\*

COLUMBUS, Ohio (Reuters) - The families of two black males fatally shot by Columbus, Ohio, police called on Tuesday for independent investigations by federal officials of the separate incidents.

The police shootings of 13-year-old Tyre King on Sept. 14 and Henry Green, 23, on June 6 in Columbus, along with recent fatal police shootings in Charlotte, North Carolina, and Tulsa, Oklahoma, have added to the broad debate on race relations and the rise of the Black Lives Matter movement.

"Enough is enough," a sobbing Adrienne Hood, Green's mother, said at a news conference in Columbus attended by family members and friends of both victims. "There is a culture in our police department that needs to change."

\*\*\*\*\*

TEHRAN (FNA) - Pakistani journalist Karim Khan sued the U.S. government for the death of his son and brother, claiming that the CIA killed them both in a New Year's Eve drone strike in 2009, in Pakistan's North Waziristan tribal region.

Khan's son, 16-year-old Zahirullah, was a 10th grade student, and Asif Iqbal, his brother, was a local schoolteacher who had a Master's degree in modern languages. Neither had any ties to terrorist groups, Sputnik reported.

"We would show their tyrannous face to the whole world...that's all. They cannot bring back my brother or my son...but I will fight against them as far as I can," Khan told Al Jazeera.

## Catalonia President Promises 2017 Independence Referendum



People hold Catalan separatist flags known as "Esteladas" during a gathering to mark the Catalonia day "Diada" in central Barcelona, Spain, September 11, 2016.

MADRID (Dispatches) - The president of Spain's Catalonia region on Wednesday said he would call a Scotland-style independence referendum in September 2017, in a move likely to infuriate Madrid.

"We will look for an agreement

(with the central government) until the very end, we will at every moment work with the will to hold a referendum in agreement with the state," Carles Puigdemont told regional lawmakers.

"But if we come to the end of our

term in office and there has been no positive response, we will be ready to... call a referendum for the second half of September of next year."

Secessionist parties approved a plan to achieve independence in mid-2017 after winning a clear majority in regional elections last year, but have since become divided by ideological differences and little progress has been made.

The pro-independence coalition ruling Catalonia broke down in June when its most radical component -- the far-left CUP party -- refused to back the government budget for 2016, forcing Puigdemont to call a vote of confidence which takes place Thursday.

The CUP had since said it would help bring the pro-independence coalition back together and vote for Puigdemont, but only in exchange for a Scotland-style referendum next year.

## After Mosque Bombing

# Germany Boosts Security for Muslim Centers in Dresden

BERLIN (Reuters) - German police are stepping up protection of Muslim institutions in Dresden after two improvised bombs exploded in the eastern city on Monday evening, one at a mosque and one at an international conference center.

No one was hurt by the blasts although the imam of the mosque was inside the building with his wife and sons.

"Even if we so far have no claim of responsibility, we must go on the basis that the motive was xenophobic," Horst Kretzschmar, president of Dresden police, said in a statement.

He said police believed there was a link to celebrations

planned for the coming weekend in the city to mark the anniversary of German reunification on Oct. 3, 1990.

Kretzschmar said three mosques, a Muslim social center and a prayer room would be given protection immediately.

Soon after the mosque explosion, Dresden's International Congress Center was also damaged by a home-made device and the bar of a nearby hotel was evacuated.

Mehmet Demirbas, founder of the mosque that was hit, said the Muslim community had been expecting some kind of attack for a long time.

"Glass panes have been broken in the past, or graffiti on the

wall. But this is the first time something like this happens. Hopefully it will be the last time and we carry on happily living in Dresden," he said.

Dresden was the cradle of the anti-Islam PEGIDA grassroots movement whose weekly rallies attracted around 20,000 supporters at the height of its popularity at the start of 2015.

The influx of about 1 million migrants, mostly Muslims, to Germany last year has increased social tensions, especially in eastern Germany where there have been some high-profile attacks on refugee shelters.