

# Why conspiracy theorists won't give up on MH17 and MH370

August 20 2014, by Martin Parker

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Was it the Illuminati? Credit: EPA

A huge criminal investigation is underway in the Netherlands, following the downing of flight MH17. Ten Dutch prosecutors and 200 policemen are involved in collecting evidence to [present at the International Criminal Court](#) in the Hague. The investigation may take time to find the real perpetrators, but that hasn't stopped conspiracy theorists from speculating.

Human beings are pattern-seeking creatures. We take the raw material from our senses, and shape it into descriptions, theories and predictions. The conspiracies that now surround MH17 and prior to that flight MH370 are an example of the same urge to order.

In the case of MH370, which crashed in the southern Indian Ocean, the disappearance of an airliner with 239 people on board, begs for explanation, and so the theorists step in and start chattering on their blogs.

The speculations around the destruction of MH17 have a slightly different character, perhaps because "the facts" seem to be clearer, and the key agents more obvious. After all, the grammar of any [conspiracy theory](#) about an event begins with the "who benefits" question.

## Searching for logic

So who would have wanted the second Malaysia Airlines plane to be shot down? The Russians and the Ukrainian rebels don't have much to gain from being portrayed as the murderers of 298 people. So if there wasn't an advantage then they wouldn't have done it, which is where the wheels of conspiracy logic then [begin to grind](#). All the explanations then assume that the guilt of the Russians and their proxies is what "they" want us to believe, but that the truth is more complicated.

The next obvious candidates are the Ukrainian government, attempting to swing international sympathy against the rebels and their supporters. Or, that the Ukrainians were actually trying to kill Vladimir Putin, whose official jet was flying back over Europe at the same time, and bore similar markings to MH17.



Credit: EPA

Israel is invoked in many conspiracies of course, so there are suggestions that the jet was shot down in order to distract attention from the first day of the offensive in Gaza. Another account then focuses on the fact that there were delegates from a conference about AIDS on board, and hence that they were killed in order to prevent AIDS research from making progress.

The biggest swathe of conspiracies suggests that MH370 and MH17 are actually the [same plane](#). The first plane, they claim, was hijacked and flown somewhere secret to be stored for a while. It was then rigged with explosives, flown over Donetsk and blown up in order to implicate one of the parties. A large amount of evidence about expired passports, parachutes seen descending from the plane, and photos of the damage on parts of the fuselage are all deployed in order to support suggestions as

to who might be responsible – the American intelligence agency CIA, organised crime, the Illuminati and so on.

Some of these accounts are offensive, or mad, or both. There are others who are busy claiming that the mad and offensive conspiracies are being disseminated by those who are trying to distract us from seeing "the truth". Anyone who takes a position on a conspiracy is entangled within it, whether they like or not. And that includes this piece, of course.

As Mel Gibson's character Jerry Fletcher says in the 1997 movie Conspiracy Theory:

*A good conspiracy is unprovable. I mean, if you can prove it, it means they screwed up somewhere along the line.*

## **All conspiracy theorists are not mad**

Now Jerry Fletcher might sound crazy, but consider the alternatives. The first would be to say that there are no conspiracies. This is clearly mad, because we know that powerful forces do try to arrange the world for their benefit.

The second [gulf of Tonkin incident](#) which justified US involvement in Vietnam was proven to be a fiction, and there is plenty of evidence about ["false flag"](#) and similar covert operations activities by everyone from the CIA to the British secret service MI6. Add to that the activities of global elites at Davos and the routine deceit practised by capitalist corporations and you would be naive to believe that the world is what it seems.

The other alternative is less exciting. That would be to say that there are coincidences and mistakes, and that they can shape the world too.

The fact that the two jets just happened to be from the same airline, or

that an under-trained, trigger-happy separatist couldn't recognise a passenger plane, are events which are disqualified within conspiracy thinking.

Their assumption is that there is a logic to events, a pattern to the world, and that stuff doesn't just happen. It is only in this sense that conspiracy theorists are mad, because most of their reasoning is perfectly sane. The problem is distinguishing the stupid accidents from the cunning plans, and that is something that none of us are terribly good at.

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Source: The Conversation

Citation: Why conspiracy theorists won't give up on MH17 and MH370 (2014, August 20) retrieved 20 March 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2014-08-conspiracy-theorists-wont-mh17-mh370.html>

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