

# Ambassador Power's Remarks After a Vote on UN Security Council Resolution 2166

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*On July 21, 2014, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power explained the U.S. vote on Security Council Resolution 2166 on the Downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17 in Ukraine. The resolution was created to investigate the circumstances of the crash and protect international investigators' access to the site.*

Today's resolution calls for a full, thorough and independent investigation into the horrific downing of Malaysian Airlines Flight 17. When 298 civilians are killed, we agree that we must stop at nothing to determine who is responsible and bring them to justice.

As we take this step, we are joined by the Dutch and Australian ministers, whose countries suffered an immense and heart-wrenching loss on Thursday – one they are still grappling with, together with nine other countries from where the victims came. We extend our deepest condolences to those countries, the families of victims they represent, and all of the people who lost loved ones on that plane. Your presence here today, along with the dozens of other countries whose representatives will speak, gives even greater urgency to our calls for the dignified return of the victims and our pursuit of truth and justice.

As we reflect on the immeasurable loss suffered by these families around the world, we are not only outraged at the attack itself; we are horrified and enraged by what has happened since – by the clear intention of some to obstruct an investigation into how the passengers and crew died.

Even after adopting this resolution, it is worth asking: If there really is consensus that this crime merits an immediate and impartial investigation, why did we still feel the need to meet today in order

to demand one?

We came together because not everyone has been supporting a real investigation into this crime. If they were, international experts would have had unimpeded access to the crime scene. And all of the wreckage would have been left where it had fallen.

That has not happened. Instead, armed thugs have walked around the site, with little regard for where they step. We have literally heard the sound of debris – all of it evidence that needs to be carefully preserved – crunching beneath their feet. We have seen separatists moving around human remains, and carting away evidence from the site.

All around the world this weekend, people of all cultures and faiths had similar reactions to seeing the footage of the separatists damaging the site: "Stop! Those are people. Those are people's lives," we all said. The passengers aboard Malaysian Airline Flight 17 had nothing to do with the conflict in eastern Ukraine: they were families heading on vacation, students returning home from abroad, researchers trying to eradicate a deadly disease. Those who were killed deserve to be treated with dignity, and their families are crying out – as we heard – for closure.

We condemn the actions of the separatists who control the site. Indeed, almost everyone has condemned this grotesque behavior.

But there is one party from which we have heard too little condemnation: and that is Russia.

Russia has been outspoken on other matters. Russian officials have publicly insinuated that Ukraine was behind the crash. On Friday, Russia blamed Ukrainian air traffic controllers for this attack rather than condemning the criminals who shot down the plane. Since then, Russia has begun to blame Ukraine for the attack itself, though the missile came from separatist territory that Russia knows full well Ukraine has not yet reclaimed.

But if Russia genuinely believed that Ukraine was involved in the shoot-down of Flight 17, surely President Putin would have told the separatists – many of whose leaders are from Russia – to guard the evidence at all costs, to maintain a forensically-pure, hermetically-sealed crime scene.

We welcome Russia's support for today's resolution. But no resolution would have been necessary had Russia used its leverage with the separatists on Thursday, getting them to lay down their arms and leave the site to international experts. Or on Friday. Or on Saturday. Or even yesterday.

It turns out that only this morning – coincidentally, the very morning this Security Council was meeting to discuss the investigation – did President Putin finally issue a public call to ensure the security of international experts. However – and this is critically important – President Putin still did not direct his call to the separatists who have threatened those experts, and over whom he has enormous influence.

President Poroshenko, by contrast, has consistently done everything within his power since the crash to allow capable investigators full and unfettered access to the crime scene. He has been willing to involve ICAO, the Netherlands, and other international players – hailing their independence.

Russia's muteness over the dark days between Thursday and today sent a message to the illegal armed groups it supports: We have your backs. This is the message Russia has sent by providing separatists with heavy weapons, by never publicly calling on them to lay down those weapons, and by massing thousands of troops at the Ukrainian border.

Today, we have taken a step toward combating impunity. The resolution passed provides clear directions to safeguard and uncover the facts—however inconvenient those facts may prove to be.

We have adopted a resolution today. But we are not naïve: if Russia is not part of the solution, it will continue to be part of the problem. For the past six months, Russia has seized Ukrainian territory and ignored the repeated requests of the international community to de-escalate – all in an effort to preserve influence in Ukraine, a country that has long made clear its desire to maintain constructive ties with Moscow.

Russia must recognize that no move on the geopolitical chessboard – no zero-sum game with the West – can offset the pain being felt by the passengers' families worldwide, or the pain that Ukrainians are experiencing daily as a result of this needless conflict.

As we meet, we are seeing initial signs of the separatists allowing greater access to the crash site.

Today, three Dutch investigators have accessed the site. The separatists are attempting to hold this up as proof of their openness and good faith. But let's be clear, this is an extremely complex and time-sensitive crime scene. In that context, a spigot approach – letting in a few investigators here, a few more there – simply will not cut it. Access must be immediate and it must be full. Period. A spigot or stage-managed approach is a form of obstruction.

Russia can help change this. Russia can unequivocally condemn the separatists' inhumane treatment of the bodies at the site and use its influence to ensure they stop tampering with evidence. Russia can demand the separatists immediately adopt a ceasefire in the area around the crash site, as Ukraine has done. Russia can press the illegal groups to sit down with President Poroshenko, who has proposed a serious and reasonable peace plan. And instead of continuing to provide weapons to the separatists, Russia could take back all of the surface-to-air missiles, tanks, and other heavy weaponry that it has delivered to them.

These would not only be important steps toward achieving accountability and achieving justice for the victims. It would constitute a long overdue sign that Russia is willing to take steps to end this deadly crisis. Thank you.