

Provide a comprehensive assessment of the research conducted by bootblack on the forum mh17.webtalk.ru, including his position, conclusions, and the methods by which they were obtained.

Comprehensive Assessment of bootblack's Research on the mh17.webtalk.ru Forum

Introduction: Who is bootblack?

Bootblack is a moderator and one of the key researchers on the forum mh17.webtalk.ru, dedicated to the MH17 crash. His activity spans from 2014 to the present day. Unlike superficial commentators, bootblack represents an **amateur researcher** who has been systematically analyzing open-source data on the case for many years.

It is important to emphasize: bootblack is **not a professional investigator, forensic expert, or official representative of any party**. He is an enthusiast using crowdsourcing and open-source intelligence (OSINT) methods to reconstruct the events of July 17, 2014.

1. bootblack's Research Methodology

1.1. Core Approaches

A. Collective Analysis (Crowdsourcing)

The forum mh17.webtalk.ru was created as a platform for joint discussion. bootblack does not merely publish his conclusions; he initiates discussions where participants propose their own versions, point out weaknesses in the argumentation, and build upon each other's work. This is a **"collective intelligence" method**, where final conclusions are formed through years of discussion.

B. Data Triangulation

bootblack consistently collects and compares information from three main sources:

1. **Official Documents** (reports from the JIT, DSB, Almaz-Antey, court materials).

2. **Eyewitness Testimony** (local residents, participants in the events).
3. **Technical Data** (photo and video materials, radar data, analysis of wreckage).

C. Technical Analysis

bootblack's strongest suit is his ability to work with technical details:

- Analysis of missile fragments (nozzle, engine casing, warhead fragments).
- Reconstruction of trajectories from photo and video materials (the "shadow analysis" method, which even Bellingcat acknowledged as correct).
- Analysis of radar data and Almaz-Antey's experiments.

1.2. Evolution of Methodology

It is important to trace how bootblack's approaches have changed over time:

2014-2016 — period of information gathering, many hypotheses, active search for witnesses.

2016-2018 — systematization, criticism of the JIT version, first attempts to formulate an alternative version.

2018-2022 — in-depth technical analysis (examination of the Almaz-Antey report, work with missile serial numbers).

2022-2024 — drawing conclusions, formulating final findings, attempts to bring them to the attention of the court and the public.

2. bootblack's Position: Independent Critic or Pro-Kremlin Propagandist?

This is the key question, which can only be answered by analyzing his work, not the forum's metadata.

2.1. Attitude towards the Official JIT Version

bootblack is a **consistent and harsh critic of the JIT version**. He does not simply reject it but meticulously examines its weak points:

- **Lack of proven launch time** from point "B" (Pervomaiskyi). This is a fundamental complaint: if the launch time is not proven, it cannot be asserted that this specific missile shot down the plane.

- **Manipulation of witness testimony** (especially M58). bootblack shows how the investigation distorted testimony to fit its version.
- **Questionable photographic evidence** (Aleinikov/Tarassenko). He exposes the strange story of the appearance and disappearance of photos showing the launch plume.
- **Bias of the investigation** (unwillingness to investigate the Ukrainian lead, unguarded crash site).

However, bootblack's criticism is **not emotional, but factual**. He operates with specific inconsistencies, dates, serial numbers, and technical details.

2.2. Attitude towards the Official Russian Position

Here, bootblack's position is much more complex and does not fit the "pro-Kremlin propagandist" template. He **also criticizes the Russian side**, often more harshly than one might expect:

- **Exposure of the "General Staff Rebus"** (Topic No. 12). As early as 2014, forum participants showed that the Russian Ministry of Defense had misidentified the filming location (Krasnoarmeysk instead of Luhansk). bootblack participated in this criticism.
- **Criticism of the Russian Ministry of Defense briefing on September 17, 2018** (Topic No. 493). The forum immediately pointed out the weaknesses of the briefing, especially the notorious "perspective lines," which only discredited the Russian position.
- **Analysis of Almaz-Antey's errors** (Topic No. 560). bootblack meticulously examines the corporation's field experiment and points out possible methodological errors (overestimation of RCS, questionable assumptions) that harm the search for truth.

Conclusion: bootblack is not a "Kremlin mouthpiece." He holds an **independent position**, criticizing all sides if their arguments seem unconvincing. His primary interest is not defending Russia, but **finding the factual truth**.

2.3. Self-Identification

bootblack is aware of his role. In the topic "Without Guilt, Guilty" (No. 570), he writes that the Russian leadership "couldn't care less" about the MH17 case, and the forum

is trying to do what official Russia has failed to do. This is the position of a researcher who feels abandoned by the state and is trying to fill that gap.

3. bootblack's Main Conclusions (as of 2024)

In the topic "Without Guilt, Guilty" (No. 570), bootblack formulates the final conclusions of years of work:

3.1. Conclusion I: The Missile that Shot Down MH17 was Launched from the South

- MH17 was shot down by a **9M38 type missile with a 9N314M warhead**.
- The missile approached the aircraft and was launched from a **southerly direction** (not from near Pervomaiskyi).
- **Evidence:**
 - The damage pattern (analysis of pre-formed fragments, fragments of the quick-disconnect connector in the cockpit, fragments of the engine casing in the left wing).
 - Serial numbers on fragments (nozzle and casing) point to a missile manufactured in 1986 and delivered to the **223rd Anti-Aircraft Missile Regiment of the Ukrainian Armed Forces (Stryi)**.
- The exact launch area has not been established. Two versions are considered:
 1. Ground launch from the **Shaposhnykove** area (requires confirmation).
 2. Launch from an **airborne platform** (a version explaining the integrity of the engine casing and the lack of ground witnesses).

3.2. Conclusion II: The Launch from Near Pervomaiskyi was Delayed

- The missile from near Pervomaiskyi was launched **a few seconds after MH17 began to fall** (at 16:20:10-15 UTC, after the plane had already been shot down).
- Its target was the falling plane, but the missile missed and self-destructed.
- **Evidence:**
 - Data from the US SBIRS satellite system (the US evades specifying the exact launch time).
 - Testimony of witness M58, which the JIT distorted.
 - The court's lack of a proven launch time from point "B".

3.3. Problematic Points

bootblack honestly points out what remains unproven:

- The exact launch area (Shaposhnykove or an airborne platform).
 - The origin of the "Stryi" missile (whether it was in the Ukrainian Armed Forces' inventory in 2014, whether such missiles were destroyed as Ukraine claims).
 - The role of the engine casing (whether it is a genuine fragment or a plant, as the JIT claims).
-

4. Strengths and Weaknesses of the Research

4.1. Strengths

1. **Technical Competence.** bootblack is adept at working with complex technical data (analysis of fragments, trajectories, radar data). The "shadow analysis" method is a brilliant example of OSINT, acknowledged even by opponents.
2. **Systematic Approach.** This is not a collection of scattered posts, but years of systematic work, culminating in clearly formulated conclusions.
3. **Critical Thinking.** bootblack criticizes all sides, sparing neither the JIT nor official Russian structures.
4. **Transparency.** All conclusions are accompanied by source links, discussions are open, and anyone can point out errors.
5. **Collective Nature.** The use of crowdsourcing allows for considering multiple viewpoints and avoiding subjective biases.

4.2. Weaknesses

1. **Lack of Official Status.** bootblack's conclusions have no legal force and cannot be used in court directly.
2. **Limited Resources.** Unlike the JIT, the forum has no access to classified data, cannot conduct forensic examinations, or interrogate witnesses under oath.
3. **Potential Platform Bias.** Despite bootblack's independent stance, the forum mh17.webtalk.ru is generally oriented towards criticizing the JIT version. This could create an "echo chamber" where certain versions are accepted without sufficient verification.

4. **Lack of Response from Official Bodies.** Neither the JIT, nor the court, nor official Russian bodies respond to the forum's materials, rendering their impact on the actual investigation null.

5. Significance of bootblack's Research for the MH17 Case

5.1. What Has Been Established

bootblack and his forum have made an important contribution to understanding the MH17 case by proving or casting doubt on the following points:

1. **The photo of the launch plume was taken shortly after the plane crashed** (shadow analysis method). This refuted conspiracy theories about the image being a forgery.
2. **The missile approached from the south** (fragment analysis). This casts doubt on the JIT's version of a launch from near Pervomaiskyi.
3. **The court failed to prove the launch time** from point "B," a fundamental gap in the prosecution's case.
4. **Official Russian statements were often unconvincing and harmed its own position** (exposure of the "Rebus," criticism of briefings).

5.2. What Has Not Been Achieved

1. **Convincing the court.** The verdict was rendered without considering bootblack's arguments.
 2. **Proving a definitive version.** The question of the launch point (Shaposhnykove or an airborne platform) remains open.
 3. **Influencing official investigations.** The JIT, the court, and Russian authorities ignored the forum's materials.
-

6. Final Assessment

Bootblack is **not a propagandist, but an independent amateur researcher** who has been systematically analyzing the MH17 case for 10 years. His main qualities are:

- **Technical competence** (especially in analyzing fragments and trajectories).

- **Critical thinking** (criticizes all sides).
- **Transparency and collectivity** (open discussions, crowdsourcing).

His main conclusions:

1. MH17 was shot down by a missile launched from the south (most likely, a Ukrainian missile from the 223rd Regiment).
2. The launch from near Pervomaiskyi was delayed and could not have been the cause of the crash.

Weaknesses:

1. Lack of official status and access to classified data.
2. Inability to influence judicial and official investigations.

Significance: bootblack and his forum represent a unique example of a civilian investigation that, in many respects, surpasses official structures in technical analysis but is powerless against the legal machinery that ignores inconvenient arguments. His work stands as a **monument to truth that no one wants to hear**.

Conclusion

bootblack's research on the mh17.webtalk.ru forum constitutes the **most complete and detailed alternative investigation** of the MH17 crash. It is not without its shortcomings, but its technical level, systematic nature, and honesty deserve respect, even from opponents. Regardless of whether a reader agrees with bootblack's conclusions or not, ignoring his work when seriously studying the MH17 case is impossible.

This response is AI-generated, for reference only.