



Russia Accuses Turkey of Siding With ISIS to Obtain Oil

Angry words continue to be exchanged between Turkish and Russian leaders following the shooting down of a Russian Sukhoi Su-24M jet on November 24 after it very briefly overflowed Turkish airspace. During a November 26 speech, Turkish president Tayyip Erdogan stated: "We very sincerely recommend to Russia not to play with fire."



Erdogan also said he hoped to meet face-to-face with Russian President Vladimir Putin at the United Nations Climate Summit outside Paris on November 30.

The same day, Sergei Naryshkin, the speaker of the lower house of Russia's parliament, said that his government has the right to make a military response, calling the incident an "intentional murder of our soldiers."

Also that day, Putin, speaking during a joint press conference with French President Francois Hollande in Moscow, suggested that Turkey had received intelligence from the United States that allowed it to strike the Russian bomber:

The American side, which leads the coalition that Turkey belongs to [NATO], knew about the location and time of our planes' flights, and we were hit exactly there and at that time.

Why did we pass this information to the Americans? Either they were not controlling what their allies were doing, or they are leaking this information all over the place.

Meeting on the sidelines of the Climate Summit in Paris on November 30, VOA News reported, President Obama expressed regret to Putin over the Turkish shootdown of the Russian jet last week, but also urged Putin to attempt to reduce tensions with Turkey stemming from the incident.

VOA cited a White House statement noting that Obama and Putin "discussed the imperative of making progress" at talks in Vienna to reach a cease-fire and a political resolution, but said that the two leaders are at odds on the fate of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. Obama told Putin that Assad must step down as a condition for any power transition, but Moscow has continued its aerial bombardment of the anti-Assad rebels.

The White House said that Obama stressed to Putin that Russia should focus its attacks in Syria on ISIS targets, not on the Assad opposition groups.

However, the White House ignored the fact that ISIS is among the rebel coalition fighting against the Assad government and has benefited from the U.S. aid supplied to the rebels.

In other reports about the press conference held by Putin and Hollande, Reuters quoted Putin's statement expressing his willingness to cooperate with the United States in the fight against ISIS, but adding that cooperation had been threatened by the Turkish shootdown of the Russian plane:

We are ready to cooperate with the [anti-ISIS] coalition which is led by the United States. But of course incidents like the destruction of our aircraft and the deaths of our servicemen ... are absolutely unacceptable.



Written by [Warren Mass](#) on December 1, 2015

And we proceed from the position that there will be no repeat of this, otherwise we'll have no need of cooperation with anybody, any coalition, any country.

During the conference, Putin suggested that he had a better working relationship with France in fighting ISIS than he did with the United States.

A report on the Moscow press conference by Agence France-Presse (AFP) cited Putin's categorization of Turkish claims that it did not know the plane it shot down was Russian as "rubbish." He elaborated:

[Russian planes] have identification signs and these are well visible. Instead of ... ensuring this never happens again, we are hearing unintelligible explanations and statements that there is nothing to apologize about.

During the conference, Putin also accused Turkey of buying oil from ISIS, which relies on oil revenues to finance its terrorist activities, and said there was "no doubt" that oil from "terrorist-controlled" territory in Syria was being transported across the border into Turkey. "We see from the sky where these vehicles [carrying oil] are going," Putin said. "They are going to Turkey day and night."

"These barrels are not only carrying oil but also the blood of our citizens because with this money terrorists buy weapons and ammunition and then organize bloody attacks," Putin added.

On November 30, speaking to reporters outside NATO headquarters in Brussels, Turkey's Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu said his country would not apologize for the shootdown of the Russian plane. "No country should ask us to apologize," Davutoglu was quoted by Reuters as saying. "The protection of our land borders, our airspace, is not only a right, it is a duty," said the prime minister. "We apologize for committing mistakes, not for doing our duty."

NATO chief Jens Stoltenberg, while affirming Turkey's right to defend its borders, blamed the incident on the fact that Russia and the U.S.-led coalition were working separately in the fight against ISIS.

"If there are two coalitions functioning in the same airspace against ISIL, these types of incidents will be difficult to prevent," he said.

Describing the dysfunctional conditions of two competing coalitions fighting against ISIS involves more factors than can be described succinctly. One significant factor is that the insurgency is a U.S.-supported one, begun against the secular government of Bashar al-Assad in Syria in 2011, which destabilized much of that country and provided ISIS with a foothold and much-needed weaponry. This U.S. support of the rebel movement was described by Alex Newman in his article for *The New American*: "[ISIS: The Best Terror Threat U.S. Tax Money Can Buy](#)." That article quoted a statement made by Vice President Joe Biden noting that America's "anti-ISIS" allies (the Islamist rulers of Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Saudi Arabia) "poured hundreds of millions of dollars and tens, thousands of tons of weapons into anyone who would fight against Assad; except that the people who were being supplied were Al Nusra and al Qaeda and the extremist elements of jihadis coming from other parts of the world."

Newman noted that Biden failed to mention the role of the CIA and the State Department in assisting the anti-Assad coalition, assistance that helped ISIS grow from a rag-tag group of jihadists into a major force in the region. ISIS also benefited from the U.S. invasion of Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein. As Newman wrote:

There was virtually no al-Qaeda in Iraq prior to the U.S. invasion and occupation. That particular interventionist U.S. foreign policy "blunder" also proved to be crucial to the emergence of ISIS, as



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the terror group began as an offshoot of the previously non-existent al-Qaeda in Iraq.

While officials in the Russian government cannot always be trusted to be unbiased sources of information, a charge made recently by Russia's Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov is still worthy of consideration, and if true, raises one more puzzling question about the integrity of the anti-ISIS coalition. Shortly after the shootdown of the Russian plane by Turkey, Lavrov charged: "We have serious doubts this was an unintended incident and believe this is a planned provocation" (by Turkey).

A press release issued by Russia's Ministry of Foreign Affairs quoted a statement from Lavrov pointing out that "by shooting down a Russian plane on a counter-terrorist mission of the Russian Aerospace Force in Syria, and one that did not violate Turkey's airspace, the Turkish government has in effect sided with ISIS."

The press release also cited Lavrov's statement about Turkey's role in propping up the terror network through the oil trade:

The Russian Minister reminded his counterpart about Turkey's involvement in the ISIS' illegal trade in oil, which is transported via the area where the Russian plane was shot down, and about the terrorist infrastructure, arms and munitions depots and control centers that are also located there.

If Lavrov's charges are true, then it is possible that Turkey's downing of the Russian plane was motivated not by a brief overflight of its airspace, but because Turkish authorities were protecting the ISIS oil shipments to Turkey against an attack by the Russian fighter-bomber.

Of course, given the U.S. support of the anti-Assad rebels that aided ISIS, Turkish support for ISIS would not be surprising. Furthermore, this scenario does cast the entire anti-ISIS campaign as just one more "no-win war."

Considering that Turkey is a NATO member, this incident also lends credence to those who have long called for the United States to withdraw from that regional arrangement of the UN. Under NATO, the United States is expected to view an attack on any of the 27 other member nations — including Turkey — as an attack upon the United States. Article V of the North Atlantic Treaty makes this clear: "The Parties agree that an armed attack against one or more of them in Europe or North America shall be considered an attack against them all."

The Russian plane crisis should serve as a warning of how the NATO regional arrangement increases the odds of the United States being drawn into yet another overseas conflict. As if our never-ending interventionist involvement in the Middle East is not enough.

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