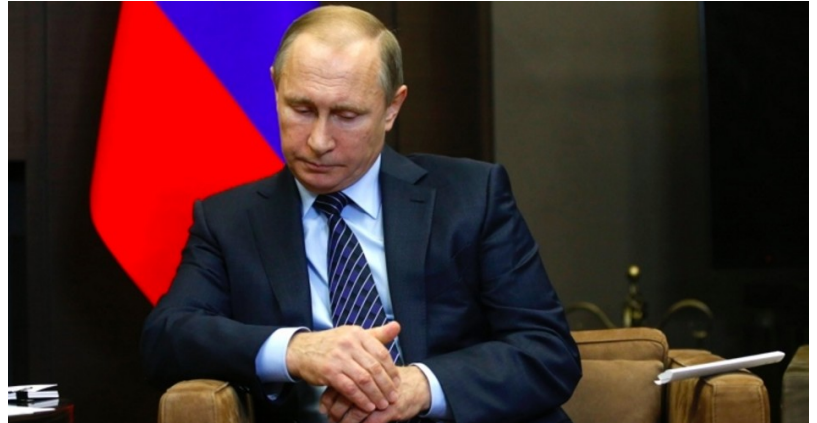




Russia and Turkey's War of Words Continues

Questions continue to swirl around Turkey's shooting down of a Russian fighter jet in northern Syria after one of the two pilots — the navigator — was found alive and rescued by Russian forces. According to the surviving crew member, the plane received no warning transmissions from Turkey and never entered Turkish airspace, asseverations that flatly contradict Turkey's version of events. And even had the aircraft entered Turkish airspace, it would only have been there for about nine seconds as it crossed a several-miles-wide anomalous border promontory. Turkey's reaction would appear to have been reckless and excessive at the very least.



In point of fact, our supposed ally Turkey has been supporting ISIS, allowing ISIS fighters to cross into Turkish territory without consequences, and possibly supplying them. This is because Turkey's greatest concern is the ascendancy of the Kurds, a people related linguistically and ethnically to the Iranians (not the Arabs or Turks) who live across a broad swathe of northern Iraq, Syria, and Turkey. For decades the Kurds have waged a low-grade insurgency against the Turkish government in Ankara, prompting occasional Turkish incursions into northern Iraq in pursuit of Kurdish militants. Given Turkey's history of cross-border warfare in the region, it is doubly surprising that Turkey should be so quick to punish what was probably an incidental and very brief border crossing by a country that has no beef with the Turks.

Russia [has launched](#) punitive bombardments of the Turkmen militias in northern Iraq who murdered one of their downed airmen and also shot down a rescue helicopter. But Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov has already [announced](#) that Russia has no intention of carrying out military reprisals against Turkey. "We are not planning to wage a war against Turkey; our attitude towards Turkish people has not changed," Lavrov told the Russian press. "We have questions only to the Turkish leadership." Lavrov went on to announce a series of minor diplomatic measures to be targeted at Turkey, including the cancellation of an upcoming bilateral "strategic planning" session and the discouragement of Russian tourism in Turkey.

Turkey's actions, in raising the specter of a wider, more direct conflict pitting Russia against the West, point up yet again the folly of being unequally yoked in a defensive treaty (NATO) with a country whose culture, politics, and interests are so at variance with our own.

Photo of Vladimir Putin: AP Images



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