

Russian President Condemns Downing of Fighter Jet by Turkey



Sochi, November 24 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin has described Turkey's downing of a Russian fighter jet conducting airstrikes against terrorists in Syria at the Turkey-Syria border as a "stab in the back."

"This event is beyond the normal framework of fighting against terrorism. Of course our military is doing heroic work against terrorism... But the loss today is a stab in the back, carried out by the accomplices of terrorists. I can't describe it in any other way," Putin said ahead of his meeting with King Abdullah II of Jordan in Sochi on Tuesday.

"Neither our pilots nor our jet threatened the territory of Turkey. This is obvious. They are fighting terrorists in the northern areas around Latakia, where militants are located," the Russian president said. And Putin emphasized that the downing of the Russian plane will have "serious consequences" for Moscow-Ankara ties.

"I don't know who was interested in what happened today, certainly not us. And instead of immediately getting in contact with us, as far as we know, the Turkish side immediately turned to their partners from

NATO to discuss this incident, as if we shot down their plane and not they ours," the Russian president said.

The ambassadors of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) are due to hold an "extraordinary" meeting at the request of Turkey, following the country's downing of the Russian warplane. The source added that the meeting is meant for Ankara to inform NATO allies about the downing of the Russian aircraft. "NATO is monitoring the situation closely and we are in close contact with Turkish authorities," the official said.

The Russian Defense Ministry said the plane downed on Tuesday was a Russian Su-24, adding that it can prove the aircraft was over Syria during its entire flight. This is while the Turkish military said the plane was warned "ten times" before it was shot down for violating Turkish airspace.

"Presumably as a result of firing from the ground, a Su-24 plane of the Russian forces crashed in the Syrian Arab Republic," Russian news agencies quoted the ministry as saying, with Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov describing the shooting down as "a very serious incident."

Turkish media reports said militants in Syria have captured one of the pilots after both of them left the plane by parachute, but Syrian opposition sources said one pilot was killed and another is still missing.

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