

# Can the Downing of Russia's IL-20 be the Beginning of the End for Israeli Hubris?

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*None of us would be cheering on a war that could easily be the absolutely final one if President Putin had not defused the situation while clearly signalling that he holds Israel accountable for downing the Russian IL-20 reconnaissance aircraft even though it was shot down by a Syrian missile. If he did not why would he have signed off on the Russian MOD's statement which squarely placed the blame on Israel.*

"The blame for the downing of the Russian plane and the deaths of its crew members lies squarely on the Israeli side," the Minister Shoigu said. "The actions of the military were not in keeping with the spirit of the Russian-Israeli partnership, so we reserve the right to respond."

Furthermore, in declaring that he will upgrade the safety of Russian military personnel in Syria and the security of the Russian military facilities, Putin says, "These will be the steps everyone will notice." Are these just innocuous words meant to placate or is there more to them? Will these measures be so different or unexpected that it cannot be missed. Some three days after the incident it is reported that Russian boots on the ground are all over Syria making attacks on Syrian and Iranian positions difficult because the risk of hitting Russian soldiers are increased manifold.

Opinions vary, from Israel being able to do the most diabolical things with impunity, to others arguing that Russia's Atlanticist fifth column is too strong for Putin to ignore, while still others say there will no doubt be some form of retribution. Retribution there will be once the initial Russian MOD position is verified. If nothing else Russia must save face.

And how can it not be verified when the undeniable fact, difficult to even justify, is the 1 minute warning given to the Russians by the Israelis of the attack on Syria's Latakia province. That miserable minute left no possibility for the IL-20 to take evasive action. Furthermore, the Russians are saying that the IL-20's position cannot but show up on Israeli radar.

Israel refuses to take the blame. One pro-Israel comment piece even put forward the preposterous suggestion that Syria may have purposely targeted the IL-20 so that Israel will be blamed. And what will Damascus do if Moscow, seeing through this deception, simply up stakes and went home? It is absurd to suggest that Syria, so close to victory, will resort to such stupidity. To what purpose?

That Putin merely stated the obvious, that Israel did not shoot the IL-20, is intended to resist what is a dangerous provocation. Having reserved the right to respond, more pertinent therefore, are the measures he will put in place to safeguard both Russian lives and bases in Syria. For instance, where once he was careful to take into consideration Israeli fears of being attacked by Syria now that will no longer be a priority. The S-300, or even the S-400, may yet find its way into Syria's air defence system with even the possibility of Russian soldiers manning them to ensure that another friendly fire will not recur, what more enemy fire.

For, the rationale of Russian presence in Syria is war on terrorism unlike that of others who seek, at least, regime change if not a perpetual war. After all, the timing of the Israeli attacks on Latakia, reportedly timed to synchronise with that of a French frigate's attack, was suspicious. And, the 1 minute grace period was surely intended to place the IL-20 where it was, to cover the Israeli F-16s firing on Latakia. That scenario coming so soon after the postponed Idlib assault by the Syrian Arab Army backed by Russian air cover hints at instigating a conflagration that will keep the war going regardless of whether it might lead ultimately to WW3.

While Moscow is intent on decimating the terrorists that, if not put down completely might come home to haunt them, it has no wish to commit a massacre of the civilian population of Idlib, the last remaining stronghold of the Jihadists in Syria. Hence the deal with Turkey acquiesced to by Damascus. The demilitarised zone agreed to will, if Turkey keeps its end of the bargain, disarm the Jihadists and the hardcore ones ultimately "disappeared".

While Putin's priority in Syria is the terrorist menace, he faces a much darker enemy because these terrorist are proxy armies trained and financed by the US and its allies. If initially it was a simple matter of eliminating rogue Islamists it has now become obvious that they are part and parcel of a bigger conspiracy by the US and its allies, who chose to weaponise Islam by birthing on an unsuspecting world Islamophobia aimed at manufacturing consent for Washington's policy of perpetual war.

Israel is an irritant, albeit a major one, but Syria's war cannot end for as long as the the US and its allies refuse to allow peace to return. While Tel Aviv is instrumental in keeping the fires of war burning with its persistent attacks on Syria on the make believe fear of Iranian ambitions, the greater challenge is to eliminate a proxy army which its sponsors keep regenerating.

The Israel problem can be overcome. Despite all the talk that Tel Aviv is protected by both Moscow and Washington, Golan Heights is no longer a walkover. Russia is peace-keeper and given that Syria is a staunch ally and a victory over the terrorists — some sponsored by Israel — was hard fought for costing the lives of 15 Russian airmen crew of the IL-20, territorial violations is no longer a given. Coupled this with the unbeatable S-400 air defence system, say, Israel's wings are forever clipped.

Can this cause the unravelling of the Zionist bully? Can it then be forced to the negotiating table with the Palestinians and a fair and just solution be achieved for a free Palestine? Could this be that which Putin promised will not go unnoticed?

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