

Putin Accuses Obama of Leaking Flight Details to Turkey after Russia Releases Video of S-400 SAM Deployment in Syria

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As reported two days ago, one of the first decisions a very angry Russia took in the aftermath of the shooting down of its Su-24 by a Turkish F-16 was to dispatch a Moskva guided-missile cruiser off the coast of Syria to provide air cover for its jets operating near Latakia, as well as send an unknown number of [ultramodern S-400](#) (or SA-21 Growler in NATO designation) SAM batteries to Latakia to make sure that the tragic incident from Tuesday never repeats itself by sending Turkey a very clear message that the next time a Turkish warplane engages a Russian jet, Russia will immediate retaliate using ground forces.

Earlier today, Russia made a very explicit demonstration of the deployment of at least two S-400 batteries at Syria's [Khmeimim airbase](#), with the Russian Ministry of Defense promptly publicizing the arrival with the following clip.

With a range of 250 miles, the S-400 could easily strike Turkish targets, and as the map below shows, Russia could even take down targets over northern Israel. As cited by the Independent, Nick de Larrinaga, Europe editor of the defense magazine IHS Jane's Defense Weekly, said it would be "a significant increase" in the reach of Russian air-defense capacities. "The message that the Russians are trying to send is that they're capable of defending themselves in Syria, should the situation escalate."



Needless to say, the US was not enthused and earlier today the US embassy in Moscow said that the "Russian deployment of the S-400 air-defense system to Syria won't aid the fight against the Islamic State, with the US diplomat adding that the US is hopeful Russia won't use the system to target planes flown by international coalition since Islamic State doesn't have air force." Clearly a warning to Putin not to dare use the rockets against Turkish (or other coalition) jets.

So what is Putin's intention by escalating the military deployment of Russian weapons in Syria? Conveniently he explained his thinking just a few hours ago during his press conference with Francois Hollande. In answering a question by a reporter from French Le Monde, Putin said the following:

The S-400 is an air defense system. The reason we didn't have the system in Syria is because we thought our planes were flying at high enough altitudes where a terrorist could not reach them; they don't have weapons capable of

downing our planes at the altitude of over 3 or 4 thousand meters. And We could never think that we could be stabbed in the back by a country we regarded as our ally. Our planes operated at altitudes of 5-6,000 meters and were completely unprotected against potential attacks from fighter jets – we could never imagine that that could be possible otherwise we would deploy such systems in the area protecting our bombers against possible attacks.

...

We never did it because we regarded Turkey as our friend, we never expected an attack from that side. This is why we regard this attack as that of a traitor. But now we know that this is possible, and we have to protect our planes. This is why we deployed a modern system, the S-400, it has a pretty long range and it's one of the most effective systems of this kind in the world. We will not stop there: if we have to we will also deploy our fighter jets in the area.

Bottom line: another direct engagement by a Turkish fighter will be its last, and in fact now that Russia is prepared we would not be at all surprised to see Russia cross into Turkish airspace on purpose just to provoke Erdogan to repeat the events from last week, only this time with the Russian ready and prepared to retaliate to any engagement. In fact, the odds of Russia doing just that in the next few days are especially high.

But while the reason behind the S-400 deployment was largely known to most, where Putin's press conference took an unexpected detour was what he said just around 20:30 in, when in not so many words, Putin effectively accused the US of leaking the coordinates of the Russian plane to Turkey, which was merely a hitman acting with the blessing of the Pentagon.

This is what Putin said:

We told our US partners in advance where, when at what altitudes our pilots were going to operate. The US-led coalition, which includes Turkey, was aware of the time and place where our planes would operate. And this is exactly where and when we were attacked. Why did we share this information with the Americans? Either they don't control their allies, or they just pass this information left and right without realizing what the consequences of such actions might be. We will have to have a serious talk with our US partners.

In other words, just like in the tragic bombing of the Kunduz hospital by US forces (which has now been attributed to human error), so this time the target was a Russian plane *which the US knew about well in advance*, was targeted however not by the US itself, but by a NATO and US-alliance member, Turkey.

And while the deployment of the Russian SAM missiles was already known, the real message from today's presser, the one that will be the topic of a private and "serious talk with Russia's US partners", is that Putin indirectly blames Obama for what happened on Tuesday realizing that Erdogan was merely the "executor", one who is simply motivated to protect his ([and his son's](#)) Islamic State oil routes.

Full press conference below; the discussion of Russia's S-400 deployment begins 17:30 in:

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