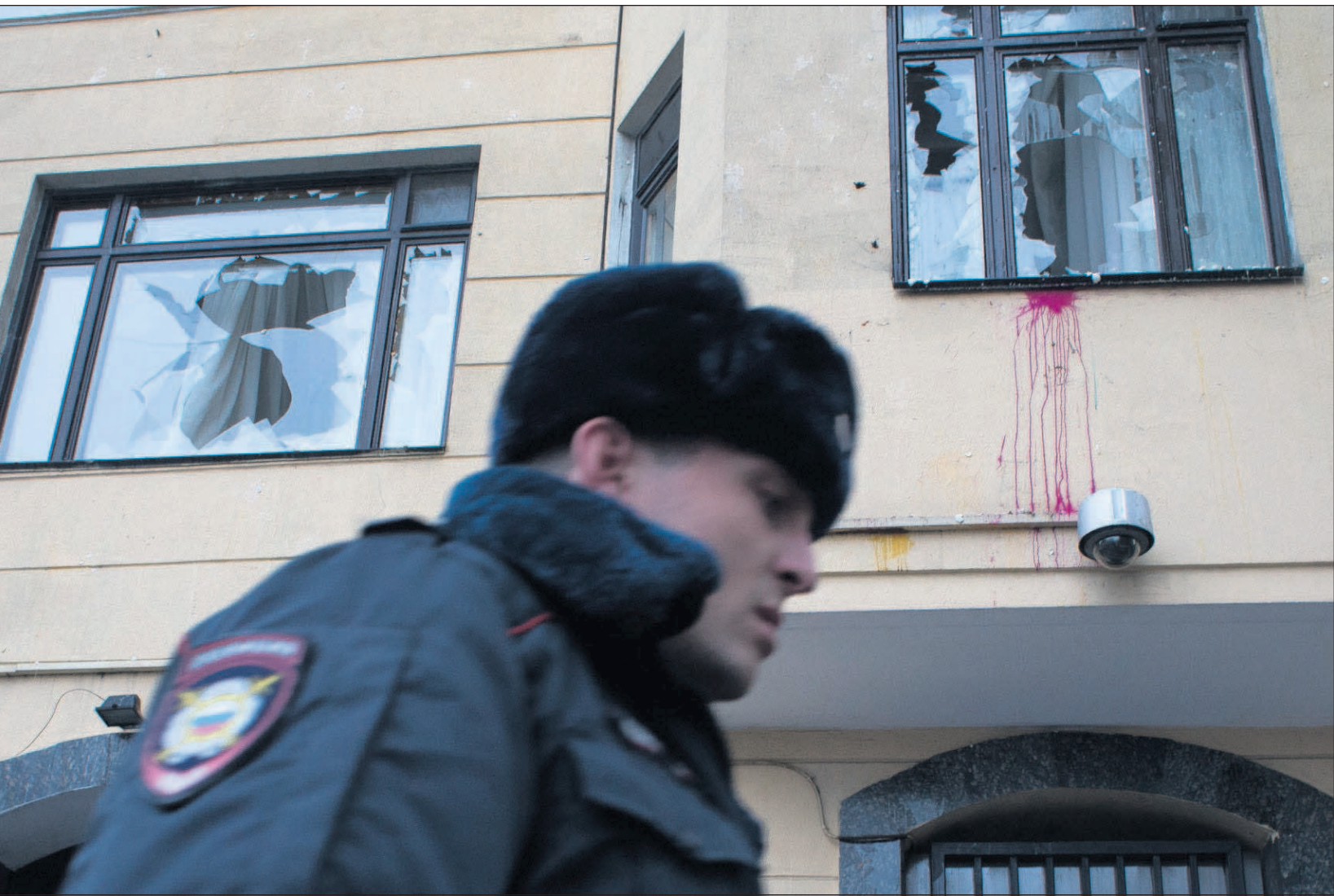




A policeman walks past the Turkish Embassy with broken window planes in Moscow, Russia, on Wednesday. Windows at the embassy's compound were shattered on the first and second floors and eggs pelted against the walls on Wednesday after a protest there went sour. Police cleared the area and arrested some protestors shortly after the protest began.

Putin sends air-defense missiles to Syria to deter Turkish fire

By **VLADIMIR ISACHENKOV**
Associated Press

MOSCOW — In a move raising the potential threat of a Russia-NATO conflict, Russia said Wednesday it will deploy long-range air defense missiles to its base in Syria and destroy any target that may threaten its warplanes following the downing of a Russian military jet by Turkey.

The incident was the first time in half a century that a NATO member shot down a Russian plane. If Russia responds by downing a Turkish plane, NATO member Turkey could proclaim itself under attack and ask the alliance for military assistance.

Most observers believe that a direct military confrontation is unlikely, but that the shooting down of the plane will further fuel the Syrian conflict and complicate international peace efforts.

The situation is also alarming because the Russian and Turkish presidents both pose as strong leaders and would be reluctant to back down and seek a compromise.

The S-400 missiles, which Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered sent to the Hemeimeem air base in Syria's coastal province of Latakia, just 30 miles away from the border with Turkey, are capable of striking targets within a 250-mile range with deadly precision. The military also moved the navy missile cruiser Moskva closer to the shore to help protect Russian warplanes with its long-range Fort air defense system.

"It will be ready to destroy any aerial target posing a potential danger to our aircraft," Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said at a meeting with military officials. He also announced the severance of all military ties with Turkey and said that from now on, Russian bombers will always be escorted by fighters on combat missions over Syria.

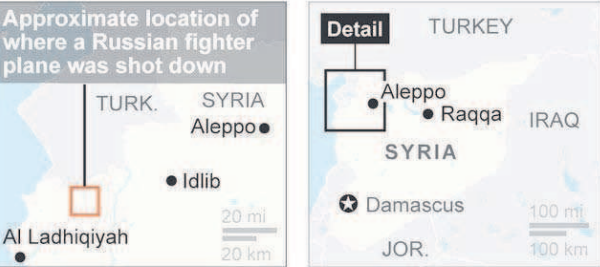
Ozgur Unluhisarcikli, director of the German Marshall Fund in Ankara, said it is possible Russia could down a Turkish plane.

"Turkish planes violate the Syrian border daily, either for reconnaissance flights or for anti-IS operations," he said. "In the same way that Turkey argues it has rules of engagement, Russia could also declare its own rules of engagement, saying it has the right to protect the skies of its ally."

The Russian plane's downing marked a dramatic turnaround in relations between Russia and Turkey,

Russian fighter shot down by Turkey

Turkey shot down a Russian fighter plane Tuesday near the border with Syria. Turkey maintains the plane was in Turkish airspace, while Russian says it was over Syria.



A Russian Su-24 medium-range bomber, known by NATO as "Fencer," the same model as the one shot down. (AP Photo/File)

Amid Syria's civil war, a James Bond-style rescue

BEIRUT (AP) — In the whirlwind of Syria's civil war, two Russian pilots parachuted from their aircraft into a chaotic front-line mountainous region near the border with Turkey after their aircraft was hit by a Turkish F-16 fighter jet.

As the two figures tumbled, almost serenely, out of the sky, they were spotted by Syrian rebels on the ground, who opened fire in their direction, hitting the pilot, Lt. Col. Oleg Peshkov, who was dead when he landed in their midst.

The co-pilot and navigator, Capt. Konstantin Murakhtin, was luckier, the wind blowing his parachute a few miles closer to the front-line, nearer to government troops. There, amid the chilly ravines, he waited for more than 12 hours until a Syrian commando unit was able to reach him.

A look at the complex rescue operation offers a glimpse at the complicated, often rugged terrain in Syria's civil war, where the front-lines are blurry. Multiple groups with shifting alliances are fighting on the ground and the sky is crowded with aircraft bombing various targets.

Both Russian airmen ejected after their aircraft was hit by a Turkish jet Tuesday. Turkey said their plane had violated Turkish airspace, a claim Russia has denied.

Adding to the day's dramatic events, one of two Russian helicopters sent to the crash site to search for survivors was also hit by rebel fire, killing one serviceman and forcing the chopper to make an emergency landing, the Russian military said.

Syrian rebels said they hit the helicopter with a U.S.-made TOW missile, and released a video that purports to show the chopper bursting into flames.

"It was like James Bond," said Zakaria Ahmad, a spokesman for a rebel faction operating in a rugged area known as the Turkmen mountains, where Tuesday's operations unfolded.

The area is mostly inhabited by Syrian Turkmen, an ethnic minority with close ties to Turkey, and has recently been the site of heightened military activity amid a Syrian ground offensive and Russian airstrikes.

Some reports said Murakhtin was found by a Syrian special operations team acting together with members of the Lebanese Hezbollah group. The Syrian army said it was a joint Syrian-Russian operation.

who have proclaimed themselves to be "strategic partners" in the past and developed booming economic ties despite differences over Syria.

Putin described the Turkish action as a "crime" and a "stab in the back," and called Turkey an "accomplice of terrorists."

In a sign of the escalating tensions, protesters in Moscow hurled eggs and stones at the Turkish Embassy, breaking windows in the compound. Police cleared the area and made some arrests shortly after the protest began.



AP Photo/Alexander Zemlianichenko, file
Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan pose for the media on November 16 before their talks during the G-20 Summit in Antalya, Turkey.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, who has often been compared to Putin for his authoritarian ways, said Wednesday that his country doesn't wish to escalate tensions with Russia.

Speaking at an Organization of Islamic Cooperation economy meeting in Istanbul, Erdogan said Turkey favors "peace, dialogue and diplomacy." He defended his country's move to shoot down the plane saying: "No one should expect Turkey to stay silent to border violations or the violation of its rights."

Putin has dismissed Turkey's claim that the Russian warplane intruded its airspace, voicing particular annoyance about Ankara turning to NATO instead of speaking to Russia, "as if it were us who shot down a Turkish plane."

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg in turn said that the downing of the plane "highlights the need to strengthen mechanisms to avoid such incidents in the future."

"We should not sleepwalk into unintended escalation," he wrote in an op-ed that is to be published Thursday and was made available to The Associated Press.

Iran meanwhile lashed out at Turkey, with the official IRNA news agency quoting Presidnet Hassan Rouhani as saying Ankara is responsible for the heightened tensions in the region.

One of the Russian pilots was killed by militants in Syria after bailing out, while his crewmate was rescued by Syrian army commandos and delivered in good condition to the Russian base early Wednesday. A Russian marine was also killed by the militants during the rescue mission.

Speaking in televised comments from the Russian base in Syria, the surviving navigator of the downed plane, Capt. Konstantin Murakhtin, denied that his jet veered into Turkey's airspace "even for a single second."

He also rejected Turkey's claim that it had issued repeated warnings to the Russian crew before shooting down the plane.

Putin said the Foreign Ministry's warning for Russians not to visit Turkey was needed "because we can't exclude some other incidents following what happened yesterday and our citizens in Turkey could be in significant danger."

Leading Russian tourist agencies have already suspended the sales of tour packages to Turkey, a significant blow to the country, which saw nearly 4.5 million Russian visitors last year, second only to German tourists.

Osman Ayik, the head of the Turkish Hoteliers Federation, told *Taraf* newspaper Wednesday that a decline in Russian tourists visiting Turkey would be a "disaster" for the tourism sector.

If Russia-Turkey tensions escalate further, both countries potentially could inflict significant pain on each other in many areas.

Russia was the biggest source of Turkish imports last year, worth \$25 billion, which mostly accounted for Russian gas supplies. Most Turkish exports to Russia are textiles and food, and Turkish construction companies have won a sizable niche of the Russian market.

Unluhisarcikli said that along with economic moves, Russia may also increase its support to Syrian Kurdish groups, which have been fighting against IS but not against the Syrian regime. So far, Russia has refrained from doing so as not to anger Turkey, but now it could go ahead with plans to open an office in the Syrian Kurdish regions and supply arms to the fighters, Unluhisarcikli said.

Associated Press writers Suzan Fraser in Ankara, John-Thor Dahlburg in Brussels, Zeina Karam in Beirut, Nataliya Vasilyeva and Jim Heintz in Moscow contributed to this report.

BRIEFLY

Preventable errors led to hospital attack, says U.S.

WASHINGTON (AP) — The U.S. airstrike that killed 31 civilians at a hospital in Afghanistan last month resulted from preventable errors by soldiers and airmen who violated rules of engagement and have been removed from duty while awaiting further investigation, military officials said Wednesday.

A briefing in Kabul provided the latest U.S. explanation but left some questions unanswered about an attack in which an internationally run hospital was subjected to barrages of heavy fire from an AC-130 gunship.

Among them: how the attack was ordered in a populated area based on a ground commander's request with little apparent review by higher headquarters. Gen. John Campbell, the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, said the airstrike was supposed to have been directed at a nearby facility being used as a Taliban command center but the warplane fired at the wrong building.

After the plane's targeting sensors malfunctioned, he said, the crew relied on a physical description to home in on the target. But no Americans on the ground were in position to see the hospital.

"This was a tragic but avoidable accident caused primarily by human error," said Campbell, who described the results of parallel investigations to reporters in Afghanistan and listening in at the Pentagon in Washington.

Russia crackdown on Muslims fuels exodus to ISIS

(AP) — Security forces keep devout Muslims under surveillance in places like Komsomolskoye, raiding their homes and hauling them in to provide DNA samples and fingerprints. Many in Dagestan, however, see the heavy-handed security presence as not only fueling an exodus to Syria of Islamic State recruits, but also serving to rid this part of predominantly Muslim southern Russia of potential militants by encouraging them to flee.

The two decades of Russia's war on Islamic insurgency in the North Caucasus, mainly in Chechnya and Dagestan, have fostered a generation of cut-throat Islamist fighters and given rise to a culture of violence and police profiling that has pushed conservative religious groups to the margins of society and into the jaws of the IS.

However, few if any efforts are made to stem that flow. Almost everyone in Komsomolskoye knows someone who has left for Syria. One of them was Rashid Magomedov.

A devout Muslim, he had been detained several times by security police, who his family claims planted grenades and ammunition at his home as a pretext to arrest him. Magomedov once spent two months in jail before the case was dismissed for lack of evidence. It was no surprise when he fled to Syria to join the Islamic State group, leaving behind his pregnant wife and two children.

Protesters to target Chicago shopping on Black Friday

CHICAGO (AP) — Small groups of demonstrators gathered again Wednesday to protest the death of a black teen shot by a white police officer, and they urged supporters to join them in trying to shut down Chicago's famous Michigan Avenue shopping district during the Black Friday shopping bonanza.

About two dozen protesters gathered outside Mayor Rahm Emanuel's office a day after authorities released a graphic squad-car video showing the officer firing an entire magazine into 17-year-old Laquan McDonald.