

Spat over downed warplane escalates

Associated Press

ANKARA, Turkey — A tug-of-war over a Russian warplane downed by a Turkish fighter jet at the border with Syria escalated Thursday, with Moscow drafting a slew of economic sanctions against Turkey and the Turkish president defiantly declaring that his military will shoot down any new intruder.

The spat reflected a clash of ambitions of two strongman leaders, neither of whom appeared willing to back down and search for a compromise.

Turkey shot down the Russian Su-24 military jet on Tuesday, insisting it had violated its airspace despite repeated warnings. The incident marked the first time in half a century that a NATO member shot down a Russian plane, raising the threat of a military confrontation between the alliance and Moscow.

Russian President Vladimir Putin denounced the Turkish action as a “treacherous stab in the back,” and insisted that the plane was downed over Syrian territory in violation of international law.

“Until that moment, we haven’t heard a clear apology from Turkey’s top political leadership, or an offer to compensate for the damage or a promise to punish the criminals,” he said at the Kremlin while receiving credentials from several ambassadors. “It gives an impression that the Turkish leadership is deliberately driving Russian-Turkish relations into a deadlock, and we regret that.”

But Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan was in no mood to apologize, and warned that Ankara would act in the same way in the event of another intrusion.

“Faced with the same violation today, Turkey would give the same response,” Erdogan said. “It’s the country that carried out the violation which should question itself and take measures to prevent it from happening again, not the country that was subjected to



AP Photo/Ivan Sekretarev

Photos of Lt.Col. Oleg Peshkov, left, and sailor Alexander Poznyich are placed at a monument to Soviet Officers with flowers and a toy jet made of paper outside Russian Army General Staff headquarters in Moscow, Russia, Thursday.

a violation.”

Erdogan said Turkey had not specifically targeted Russia when it shot down the plane, saying it was “an automatic response” in line with its rules of engagement.

He spoke on a more conciliatory note in separate comments on France 24. Asked if Turkey would still have targeted the plane if it positively knew it was Russian, he said: “If we had determined it, the warnings would have been different.”

The Russian and Turkish leaders are often compared to each other. Both are populist, frequently crack down on critics and often revert to anti-Western rhetoric.

They had enjoyed close relations until recently, despite differences over Syria, and regularly exchanged visits. In September, Erdogan traveled to Moscow where he and Putin attended the opening of a new mosque, and they also met separately at the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit hosted by Turkey.

On Thursday, Erdogan told France 24 television in an interview that he had tried talking to Putin but that the Russian leader did not respond.

Turkey has released audio recordings of what it says are the Turkish military’s repeated warnings to the pilot

of a Russian bomber before it was shot down at the border with Syria.

The recordings, made available to The Associated Press on Thursday, indicate the plane was warned several times that it was approaching Turkey’s airspace and asked to change course, but there is no indication of a Russian reply.

In the recordings, a voice is heard saying in broken English: “This is Turkish Air Force speaking on guard. You are approaching Turkish airspace. Change your heading south immediately.” The voice gets increasingly agitated as the warnings appear to go unnoticed.

The audio that was released only involved Turkish warnings, no replies by a Russian pilot. It was not clear if Turkey had received any replies from the Russian pilots but did not release them; if the Russian pilots never replied to the warnings; or if the Russians never even heard the warnings.

A Russian airman who survived the shoot-down and was later rescued by the Syrian and Russian commando, denied veering into Turkey’s airspace “even for a single second.” Turkey insists the plane was in its airspace for 17 seconds.

Capt. Konstantin Mura-

khtin also said he and his crewmate, who was killed by ground fire after bailing out, hadn’t heard any Turkish warnings. The Russian Foreign Ministry dismissed the audio recording released by Ankara as a fake.

Erdogan accused Russia of using its declared goal to fight the Islamic State group in Syria as a pretext to target opposition groups including the Turkmen, in order to shore up Syrian President Bashar Assad.

He also challenged Russia to prove its accusation that Turkey is buying oil and gas from IS, calling the claims “shameful” and even pledging to step down if the claim is proven.

“This is a great disrespect to Turkey and those who make the claims are slanderers,” he said. “If they prove it, Tayyip Erdogan would step down.”

Putin responded to the plane’s downing by ordering the deployment of powerful long-range air defense missiles to a Russian air base in Syria.

On Thursday, Russian state television stations ran a report showing the S-400 missiles already deployed at the Hemeimeem air base in Syria’s coastal province of Latakia, just 30 miles away from the border with Turkey.

BRIEFLY

Pope says ‘catastrophic’ if interests derail climate talks

NAIROBI, Kenya (AP) — Pope Francis warned Thursday that it would be “catastrophic” for world leaders to let special interest groups get in the way of a global agreement to curb fossil fuel emissions as he brought his environmental message to the heart of Africa on the eve of make-or-break climate change talks.

Francis issued the pointed warning in a speech to the U.N.’s regional office here after celebrating his first public Mass on the continent: A joyous, rain-soaked ceremony before 300,000 faithful that saw the Argentine pope being serenaded by ululating Swahili singers, swaying nuns, Maasai tribesmen and dancing children dressed in the colors of Kenya’s flag.

Francis has made ecological concerns a hallmark of his nearly 3-year-old papacy, issuing a landmark encyclical earlier this year that paired the need to care for the environment with the need to care for humanity’s most vulnerable. Francis argues the two are interconnected since the poor often suffer the most from the effects of global warming, and are largely excluded from today’s fossil-fuel based global economy that is heating up the planet.

On Thursday, Francis repeated that message but took particular aim at those who reject the science behind global warming. In the United States, that accounts for several Republican presidential candidates and lawmakers, who have opposed steps President Barack Obama has taken on his own to cut greenhouse gas emissions. “It would be sad, and dare I say even catastrophic, were special interests to prevail over the common good and lead to manipulating information in order to protect their own plans and interests,” Francis said.

Projects stall after feds allow fish farming in ocean

SAN DIEGO (AP) — Some 90 percent of seafood consumed by Americans is imported — a fact that the Obama administration vowed to start turning around by expanding fish and shellfish farms into federal waters.

Yet nearly two years since the first permit was issued, the United States still has no offshore farms.

The pioneers of offshore aquaculture say their plans have stalled or been abandoned because of the long and expensive federal permitting process that requires extensive environmental monitoring and data collection.

The applicant given the first permit for federal waters in 2014 has spent \$1 million and not seeded any mussels off Southern California. Another pioneer in Hawaii said there is too much red tape and plans to start his fish farm

off Mexico. Meanwhile, investors are leery to jump on board with no offshore farms in the water.

“Those jobs could have been in the U.S., the investment could have been in the U.S., but there was no way I could talk to my board of investors when there are no clear regulations set up and the monitoring burden is so ridiculous,” said Neil Sims, CEO of Kampachi Farms.

“I’m now practicing my Spanish,” said Sims, who received his permit for pens off Hawaii. He had hoped to develop a commercial operation to raise sashimi-grade Kampachi fish but plans instead to put his farm off Mexico’s Baja California peninsula next year.

He said the Mexican process was rigorous but streamlined.

Utah man passes airport security with stolen boarding pass

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — Authorities say a man with a stolen boarding pass got through airport security in Salt Lake City and checked into a flight at the gate before he was caught earlier this month.

The Deseret News in Salt Lake City reported Thursday that 61-year-old Michael Salata was arrested shortly after checking into a Southwest Airlines flight to Oakland, California, on Nov. 5.

Salt Lake Airport Police Chief Craig Vargo says Salata grabbed the boarding pass accidentally left on a kiosk and used it to get through a Transportation Security Administration checkpoint.

Police say Salata wasn’t caught until the woman who had left the pass also checked in using a replacement ticket uploaded on her phone.

TSA spokeswoman Lori Dankers says that aside from the identification mistake, Salata was properly screened.

Trump called out for appearing to mock disability

WASHINGTON (AP) — An advocacy group is offering Donald Trump sensitivity training after the Republican presidential candidate appeared to mock a reporter with a disability.

At issue is what *The New York Times* interprets as Trump’s attempt Tuesday to “ridicule the appearance” of journalist Serge Kovaleski.

Trump challenged recollections by Kovaleski and others about the 9/11 aftermath during a speech. Trump has made unsubstantiated claims that thousands of Muslims in New Jersey were seen celebrating the attack.

Trump said, “Poor guy, you oughta see this guy,” then gestured in a jerky fashion as if imitating Kovaleski’s movements.

The Ruderman Family Foundation says Kovaleski has a congenital condition affecting joint movement. The foundation offered Trump sensitivity training to help him understand people with disabilities.

Russia, France agree to cooperate against IS

Associated Press

MOSCOW — The presidents of France and Russia agreed Thursday to tighten cooperation in the fight against the Islamic State group, although they remained at odds over their approach toward Syrian President Bashar Assad.

IS has claimed responsibility for deadly attacks against both of the countries’ citizens in recent weeks: Nov. 13 shootings and suicide bombings in Paris which killed 130 people, and the Oct. 31 bombing of a Russian passenger jet over Egypt’s Sinai Peninsula that claimed 224 lives.

French President Francois Hollande has been on a diplomatic drive since the Paris attacks to increase cooperation in tackling IS, which holds swathes of territory in both Syria and Iraq. He has met this week with President Barak Obama, German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Italian Prime Minister Matteo Renzi before flying to Moscow on Thursday for talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Hollande and Putin agreed on increasing intelligence sharing, intensifying their airstrikes against IS in Syria and cooperating on selecting targets — two days after Turkey downed a Russian warplane near the Syrian border.

“We agreed on a very important issue: To strike the terrorists only, Daesh and the jihadi groups only, and not to strike the forces and the groups that are fighting against the terrorists,” Hollande said after the meeting, referring to IS by its Arabic acronym. “And we are going to exchange some information about that: what can be struck, and what must not be struck.”

But the two countries remain at odds in their approach toward Assad, with Hollande saying the Syrian



AP Photo/Jacques Brinon, File

In this Nov. 23 file photo, French gendarmes officers patrol near the Eiffel Tower, in Paris.

head of state “does not have his place in Syria’s future,” and Putin stressing that “the Syrian president’s fate should be entirely in the hands of the Syrian people.”

Putin described Assad’s army as a “natural ally” in the fight against IS — an essential force capable of battling the extremist group on the ground. He added that Russia was ready to cooperate with other groups ready to fight IS.

Russia has been Assad’s staunchest ally, and has come under criticism for targeting some rebel groups who are fighting against both IS and Assad in Syria’s multifaceted and complex civil war.

Obama, after meeting with Hollande, had said Russian cooperation in the fight against IS would be “enormously helpful.” The U.S. has also insisted that a political transition in Syria must lead to Assad’s departure.

“We view the U.S.-led coalition with respect and stand ready to cooperate with it,” Putin said. “We believe that we would better create a single, united coalition as it would be easier, simpler and more efficient to coordinate our work that way.”

However, he said, “if our partners aren’t ready for that, OK, we are ready to work in a different format that is acceptable to our partners. We are ready to cooperate with the U.S.-led coalition.”

Last week, Hollande called for the U.S. and Russia to set aside their policy divisions over Syria and “fight this terrorist army in a broad, single coalition.” But his office acknowledges that “coordination” sounds like a far more realistic goal.

While pledging closer cooperation, Putin also harshly criticized Washington for failing to prevent the downing of a Russian warplane engaged in

airstrikes in Syria by NATO member Turkey on Tuesday — an action which underscored the complex military landscape in Syria, where a sprawling cast of countries and rebel groups are engaged on the battlefield and in the skies overhead, sometimes with minimal coordination.

In Germany, Merkel’s Cabinet decided to send reconnaissance aircraft, tanker planes and a warship to help in the fight against IS. Defense Minister Ursula von der Leyen said the government had also agreed to provide satellite surveillance.

During Merkel’s visit in Paris on Wednesday, Hollande had said it would “be a very good signal in the fight against terrorism” if Germany could do more against IS in Syria and Iraq.

Von der Leyen said the warship would help protect France’s aircraft carrier in the eastern Mediterranean and the tanker planes could help refuel French warplanes in the air. The satellite surveillance could provide important information on IS and also protect civilians.

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