

# *Russian Foreign Minister Says Downing of Plane Planned Provocation*

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Moscow, November 25 (RHC)--Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has described the downing of a Russian warplane by the Turkish military as a "planned provocation," saying terrorist groups operating against the Syrian government are openly using Turkish territory.

Turkey shot down a Russian Su-24M Fencer aircraft with two pilots aboard on Tuesday, claiming the fighter jet had repeatedly violated the Turkish airspace. Russia dismisses Ankara's claims and says the fighter jet was downed in the Syrian airspace, where the Russian air force has been carrying out combat sorties against Takfiri terrorists since September 30th upon a request by the Syrian government.

"We have serious doubts that this action was unintentional. It looks very much like a pre-planned provocation," Lavrov told a press conference in the Russian capital, Moscow, on Wednesday. He said it is "no secret" that terrorist groups are using Turkish territory in their operations against the government of Syria.

The Russian foreign minister said the Turkish territory is used for "training and financing" the militants. Moscow, he added, backs a call by French President Francois Hollande to close the Syria-Turkey border

in an attempt to stop the recruitment and financing of the militants.

Lavrov also stated that Russia had no plan to go to war with Turkey. "We do not plan to go to war with Turkey, our attitude toward the Turkish people has not changed." However, the Russian foreign minister said Moscow would "seriously reconsider" its relations with Ankara.

Regarding an international investigation into the downing of the Russian aircraft, Lavrov said there are speculations that the downing was an "evident setup."

In response to a question about the fate of the two pilots of the Russian fighter jet, Lavrov said one of them has been rescued with the help of the Syrian army troops and is currently at Russia's Khmeimim base in western Syria.

The Russian Defense Ministry has officially reported the death of the other pilot, who "was wounded when he parachuted down and killed in a savage way on the ground" by militants.

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