

Russia Opens Black Box of Jet Downed by Turkey



Moscow, December 18 (RHC)-- In the presence of foreign experts, Russian officials on Friday opened the damaged black box of a warplane shot down by Turkey last month, promising a transparent probe into the incident.

Officials noted that the memory card sustained damage as they opened the orange-painted flight recorder, with British and Chinese experts observing the procedure. Wearing lab coats and gloves, technicians used screwdrivers and drills as they opened the device while observed by military personnel and dozens of journalists in a live national television broadcast.

Experts said the black box had sustained damage, including multiple scratches and dents, but had not been exposed to the fire at the crash site. The black box's complete findings will be revealed on Monday, according to officials.

Sergei Dronov, deputy head commander of the Russian air force, said the device was being analyzed "openly for the Russian and international public" after President Vladimir Putin had ordered that it be opened in the presence of foreign specialists.

"We have sufficient evidence that proves that the Russian aircraft did not violate Turkish airspace," said Dronov, adding that the downed plane had been flying in Syrian airspace 5.5 kilometers from the border

with Turkey. Dronov said the black box presented to the public on Friday had not been touched since it was recovered from the crash site.

The air force commander said 14 countries had been invited to monitor the investigation but only China and Britain had accepted the official offer.

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