

Russia says Israeli airstrikes on Syria put civilian flights in danger



Moscow, December 27 (RHC)-- Russia has condemned as “provocative” the latest Israeli airstrikes on Syria, saying they had endangered two civilian flights.

“Provocative acts by the Israeli Air Force endangered two passenger jets when six of their F-16s carried out airstrikes on Syria from Lebanese airspace,” Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov told reporters on Wednesday.

He added that the Israeli airstrikes took place as “two airliners, not from Russia, were preparing to land at the airports of Beirut and Damascus.”

The Syrian military did not launch surface-to-air missiles and electronic jamming “to prevent a tragedy.” One of the civilian airliners was redirected to a reserve airport in Khmeimim in western Syria.

According to the Russian Defense Ministry, the Israeli military used as many as 16 US-made laser-guided GBU-39 bombs. Most of them were destroyed by Syria’s air defenses but only two of them reached their targets.

Three personnel were injured when two precision munitions hit a logistics compound seven kilometers away from Damascus.

The statement confirmed a report by Syria's official SANA news agency that went public on Tuesday. Later on Wednesday, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs slammed the Israeli aerial attacks as a violation of the Syrian sovereignty. "We are very concerned by the attacks and how they were made. This is a gross violation of the sovereignty of Syria," the ministry said.

The attacks came less than a month since Syrian air defenses were activated against several missiles, which were aimed at the city of al-Kiswah, located approximately 13 kilometers south of Damascus.

Israel frequently attacks military targets in Syria in what is considered as an attempt to prop up militant groups that have been suffering heavy defeats against Syrian government forces.

In October, Russia equipped the Syrian army with the advanced S-300 surface-to-air missiles, days after Israeli fighter jets used a Russian surveillance aircraft flying nearby as a shield and misled the Syrian air defenses to shoot it down. Since then Israel has been very careful with its operations over Syria.

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