

Lavrov Denies Syria Jet Carried Weapons

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Putin meeting with members of the Security Council on Friday.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Friday that Russian cargo seized from a civilian plane grounded in Ankara by Turkish fighter jets earlier this week did not include arms, contradicting an allegation made by Turkey's prime minister.

Lavrov also reiterated a Russian request for an explanation regarding Turkey's failure to allow diplomats to meet with the 17 Russian citizens on board the Syrian Air jet that had been headed to Damascus.

The foreign minister's comments, made after a Security Council meeting chaired by President Vladimir Putin, seemed to increase the likelihood of Russia and Turkey butting heads over the incident.

Lavrov said that the jet's cargo — which Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan said Thursday included Russian-made ammunition — was radar equipment, not arms, and that it was being shipped legally. It was the first official comment by Russia on the nature of the

cargo. ([Related article: Turkey Says Syria Plane Carried Russian Ammunition](#))

"The cargo was electronic equipment for radar systems — dual-use equipment, but not banned by any international conventions. The shipping documents were filled out in complete accordance with the requirements," Lavrov said, according to a transcript of his comments posted on the Kremlin website.

"The shipment of this kind of cargo by civilian aircraft is absolutely normal practice," he said.

Lavrov added that Russia believed the supplier of the equipment would demand its return.

Unidentified officials told Kommersant in a report published Friday that the plane was carrying radar equipment for missile defense systems and that the cargo did not require any special authorization, since it did not represent a threat to the crew or passengers.

Erdogan said at a press conference Thursday that the plane had been carrying military equipment and ammunition produced by Russia and destined for the Syrian Defense Ministry.

Russia has supported the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad, which has been battling rebel groups in civil unrest that has left tens of thousands dead and has recently spilled over into Turkish territory. Turkey is one of the most outspoken opponents of the Assad government.

Vyacheslav Davidenko, a spokesman for Rosoboronexport, the state-owned arms-export monopoly, told Kommersant that the cargo did not belong to it.

An official from the Turkish Embassy in Moscow told Interfax on Friday that Turkey was continuing to study the cargo and would provide explanations to Russia after the analysis was complete.

Meanwhile, the Federal Security Service might begin an investigation to determine how Turkey had received the intelligence that prompted it to ground the plane.

The Turkish Foreign Ministry said Thursday that Turkey grounded the plane after being tipped off that it was carrying goods "of a nature that could not possibly be in compliance with the rules of civil aviation."

"The Turkish air force sent two F-16s to intercept [the plane] because they almost definitely knew what cargo was being transported," an unidentified government official told Kommersant. "They wouldn't have taken such a risk without being certain."

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