

Report: Syria Plane Contained Missile Defense Equipment

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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A civilian plane forced to land in Ankara by Turkish fighter jets on its way to Damascus was carrying radar equipment for missile defense systems, Kommersant reported Friday, citing unidentified officials.

The officials told the newspaper that the cargo did not require any special authorization, since it did not represent a threat to the crew or passengers of the Syrian Air jet, which was grounded by Turkey en route to Damascus from Moscow on Wednesday.

Turkish Prime Minister Tayyip 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.

Vyacheslav Davidenko, spokesman for Rosoboronexport, the state-owned arms-export monopoly, told Kommersant in an article published Friday that the cargo did not belong to it.

The Russian Foreign Ministry has not made an official comment on the nature of the cargo. The ministry said Thursday that it was "troubled" by the incident.

On Friday, a ministry official said that Russia was pushing Turkey to present it with details on the cargo and the reasons why the plane was grounded.

"We continue to insist on receiving this information and hope that it will be given to us soon," an unidentified Foreign Ministry official told Interfax.

An official from the Turkish Embassy in Moscow told the news agency 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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