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Turkey Didn’t Violate Syria Memorandum When It Downed Russian Jet – U.S. Embassy

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The U.S. Embassy in Moscow

The spokesman for the U.S. Embassy in Moscow has said that the downing of a Russian jet by Turkey earlier this week is not in violation of a safety memorandum agreed to by the U.S. and Russia last month, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

Spokesman Will Stevens said the memorandum signed by U.S. and Russian military officials in late October only applied to the safety of U.S.-led coalition aircraft and Russian aircraft within Syrian airspace, the report said.

“It does not apply to or limit the right of Turkey to defend its sovereign airspace in accordance with international law. We support Turkey's right to defends its territory and airspace,” Stevens was cited as saying in the report.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov in a phone call with U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry

on Wednesday accused Turkey of having breached the memorandum when it downed a Russian Su-24 jet on Tuesday, an online statement on his ministry's website said.

The downing of the Russian fighter jet by NATO member Turkey on Tuesday has brought to a head tensions between the U.S.-led coalition and Russia in their fight against militants in Syria.

Russia would not go to war with Turkey over the incident, Lavrov said Wednesday, but Russian officials have threatened retaliatory measures, including a curb on travel to Turkey by Russian tourists and restrictions on trade.

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