

Turkey Says Insufficient Evidence to Prosecute Suspected Killer of Russian Pilot

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A Turkish court has ruled there is insufficient evidence to prosecute a man suspected of killing a Russian pilot, the RBC newspaper reported Friday.

Turkish national Alparslan Celik admitted opening fire on the Russian pilot and his navigator as they ejected from their downed plane in November.

The Su-24 jet had been shot down by Turkish military forces near the border with Syria where Celik had been fighting a group opposing government forces in Syria. The pilot ejected safely, but was killed by ground fire. The navigator survived, although a Russian marine was killed in the mission to rescue him.

The Turkish prosecutor decided that there were no grounds for prosecution after examining the evidence, Celik's lawyer said.

Celik will remain in custody while a separate investigation into unauthorized weapons

possession is being conducted, Reuters reported.

The downing of the jet has caused long-lasting tensions between Turkey and the Kremlin. While Ankara insists that the Russian jet was in Turkey's air space and ignored repeated warnings, Russia dismisses the claims and says the plane was flying over Syria.

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