

Turkish President Apologizes For Downing Russian Bomber

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Turkish President Recep Erdogan

Turkish President Recep Erdogan has apologized for the downing of a Russian Su-24 bomber in November last year, the Kremlin said in a statement Monday.

According to the statement, President Vladimir Putin received a letter from Erdogan in which the Turkish president expressed his willingness to improve relations between the two countries and apologized for the downing of the bomber.

“I would like once again to express my sympathy and deepest condolences to the family of the deceased Russian pilot and to say sorry. I share their pain with all my heart,” Erdogan was quoted as saying in the statement.

“We perceive the family of the Russian pilot as a Turkish family. We are ready to take any initiative in order to relieve the pain and the damage we inflicted,” Erdogan added.

The Turkish air force downed a Russian Su-24 bomber jet over the Turkish-Syrian border on Nov. 24, 2015, claiming that it violated Turkish airspace. Russia denied the claims and called the incident a “stab in the back from the accomplices of terrorists.”

This was followed by a package of economic sanctions imposed on Turkey by Moscow.

Last month, the Turkish president said that he wanted to improve ties with Russia but didn't know how. Moscow repeatedly said that better relations could only be achieved if Turkey apologized for the incident but Ankara refused to do it at that time.

After Erdogan's apology, Turkish presidential spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said the Russian and Turkish authorities had agreed to take without delay all necessary measures aimed at the improvement of ties between the two countries, the Reuters news agency reported.

The renewal of cooperation between the countries has been welcomed by representatives of the Russian tourism industry.

The Russian tourism industry is looking forward to Turkey reopening for Russian tourists, Russia's Tourism Industry Union spokeswoman Irina Tyurina told Interfax Monday.

The sale of package tours to Turkey was banned as part of the economic restrictions against Ankara.

However, Tyurina noted that the ban was linked with security concerns so “there is no certainty that after the Turkish leader's apology the destination will be reopened for Russian tourists.”

The spokeswoman added that Russian tourist agencies have suffered badly due to the ban as no other country can replace Turkey in terms of price, quality and level of service, Interfax reported.

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