

# Dagestan's President Says Russia Was 'Unenthusiastic' About Turkey Reconciliation

September 09, 2016

**The  Moscow Times**

The Kremlin “lacked enthusiasm” to mend ties with Turkey after the downing of a Russian jet jeopardized the countries' diplomatic relationship, the president of Russia's republic of Dagestan has revealed.

Tensions between Russia and Turkey increased dramatically after a Russian fighter-jet was downed by Turkish forces in November 2015. Moscow maintains that the jet was in Syrian air space, while Ankara says that the plane did not respond to several warnings after it encroached on Turkish territory.

The incident caused Russia to boycott a large selection of

Turkish goods,  
as well as  
place a ban  
on package holidays to the country.

A letter of apology from [Turkish President Recep]  
Erdogan  
ultimately ended the standoff  
between the two sides in July  
, with Ankara promising to pay compensation to Russia and  
the dead pilot's family.

Dagestan's President Ramazan Abdulatipov,  
who helped to mediate between Moscow  
and Ankara, said that Russia,  
"had to overcome a psychological barrier"  
in  
the negotiations.

"Vladimir [Putin] had  
a good relationship with  
[Turkish President] Erdogan  
.

Reconciling two friends is much more complicated than people  
then making peace between  
strangers," he said.


Abdulatipov would not confirm which side had  
initiated talks,  
but the Kremlin publicly  
rejected a proposed working group between both sides in May.



Erdogan also  
showed signs of unwillingness, and did not apologize for the downing  
in the  
first draft of a letter sent to Putin,  
said Abdulatipov.



An apology was one of Russia's key conditions for normalizing the relationship,  
alongside compensation for the pilot's family, he said.

"The original version of the letter was  
very general," said  
Abdulatipov. "It was not  
anything resembling an apology."



The letter  
was eventually sent to Putin  
via Kazakh President Nursultan

Nazarbayev,  Abdulatipov  
said.

Russia and Ankara's  estrangement saw Turkey ranked as an “enemy” by  
29  percent of

Russian respondents in  poll by the independent  
Levada Center at  the start of June 2016.

The

countries have  traditionally enjoyed a good relationship, with only 1 percent of  Russians  
judging Turkey as hostile before the jet's downing in 2015.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/09/09/russia-unenthusiatic-to-mend-ties-with-turkey-says-negotiator-a55287>