

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

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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.

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