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Ankara and Moscow Pledge Closer Ties After Russian Friendly Fire Kills 3

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Defense Ministry

Turkey and Russia have pledged to boost cooperation in Syria after the deaths of three Turkish soldiers by Russian friendly fire.

A Russian warplane struck Turkish positions near al-Bab in northern Syria Thursday morning, killing three men and injuring 11 more.

Military leaders promised greater intelligence sharing during emergency talks on Thursday night. The meetings, which included Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, saw both sides commit to "better coordination" in their battle against the Islamic State.

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Presidential Spokesperson Dmitry Peskov told reporters that the friendly fire incident had been caused by a "mismatching coordinates."

He also confirmed that Russian President Vladimir Putin called Turkey's president Recep Erdogan shortly after the event to apologize for the "tragic accident" and to express his condolences.

The reports spark hope that the two nations can avoid the political turmoil which jeopardized ties in November 2015, when a Russian military jet was downed by Turkish forces along the country's border with Syria.

The incident saw Moscow place numerous sanctions on Ankara, many of which targeted the Turkish tourism industry. The sanctions were eventually lifted in July 2016, when Erdogan apologized for the incident and offered to pay compensation.

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