

Two Russian Troops Killed in Syria on New Year's Eve

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Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed the deaths of two helicopter pilots on New Year's Eve in Syria after a group of independent investigators reported the incident earlier on Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin [declared](#) victory over terrorists in the conflict-torn country during a surprise visit last month and ordered the Russian military to withdraw following a two-year intervention.

The Conflict Intelligence Team (CIT), investigative bloggers who monitor the Ukrainian and Syrian wars, said on Wednesday that a Russian attack helicopter crashed in western Syria weeks after Putin's pullout orders.

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"According to posts on a specialized forum, on Dec. 31 a Mi-24 helicopter tripped over power line wires and crashed while escorting a convoy," the CIT [wrote](#) on Facebook.

Russia's Defense Ministry confirmed that the two pilots had died and added that a flight engineer was also hospitalized, the Interfax news agency [reported](#) on Wednesday. It said that the helicopter crashed due to a technical malfunction and had not come under fire.

Citing the website Forumavia.ru, the independent researchers provided the full name of one of the crew members — Major Artyom Kulish — and identified the second by his last name Matveyev.

"It is currently unknown whether the helicopter was escorting a humanitarian convoy or a combat unit," the CIT said.

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