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Syrian Forces Shot Down Russian Plane, Killing 15 Servicemen, Ministry Says

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Il-20 / aviarf.ru

The Russian Defense Ministry has said Israel is to blame for the downing of one of its military aircraft with 15 people on board after it disappeared from radars over Syria early on Tuesday.

The Russian military said earlier that its Il-20 turbo-prop plane used for electronic reconnaissance vanished from radar screens at the same time that Israeli and French forces were mounting aerial attacks on targets in Syria. Anti-aircraft artillery operated by Syrian government forces responded to the attack, local media reported.

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The Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement Tuesday that a Syrian S-200 missile system had shot down the Il-20 as it was landing at the Hmeyhmim air base in western Syria, which is controlled by Russian forces.

However, the ministry blamed Israel for "setting up" the Russian plane by only warning Moscow of planned missile strikes one minute before they started, thus putting the plane at risk of being hit by Syrian anti-aircraft artillery systems.

“We view these provocative Israeli actions to be hostile,” Interfax quoted the ministry as saying.

“Fifteen Russian servicemen died as a result of the irresponsible actions of the Israeli military,” the ministry added.

It said Russia reserves the right to take "appropriate measures in response.”

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