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Pakistan Accepts Russia's Offer to Mediate Crisis With India, Minister Says

March 01, 2019



Shah Mahmood Qureshi **Russian Foreign Ministry**

Pakistan's foreign minister has said his country is willing to accept Russia's offer to mediate between Pakistan and India, days after a military conflict erupted between the South Asian nuclear powers.

India and Pakistan shot down each other's fighter jets on Wednesday, a day after Indian warplanes struck inside Pakistan for the first time since a war between the two countries in 1971. Russia's foreign minister said Thursday that Moscow was prepared to facilitate talks between the two sides.

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"Lavrov has offered to mediate," Shah Mahmood Qureshi was quoted as saying by Pakistan's Dawn newspaper Friday.

“I don't know about India but I want to say this to Russia: Pakistan is ready to come to the table and de-escalate tensions,” he said.

President Vladimir Putin told Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi in a late Thursday phone call that he hopes for a quick settlement of the crisis. The leaders also expressed interest in further strengthening military-technical ties.

The military escalation was sparked by a suicide bombing carried out by Pakistan-based militants in India-controlled Kashmir earlier this month. Dozens of police were killed.

Kashmir lies at the heart of a decades-long hostility between India and Pakistan, with both countries claiming sovereignty over the region.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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