



THE JIM! GRAM

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NOTE: An earlier version of this commentary appeared in [Antiwar.com](#).

This edition of *TheJIM!gram*® was drafted on November 24, soon after the shootdown of the Russian Su-24 by Turkish fighters, with updates through November 27:

‘With Us or with the Terrorists’: It’s Clear Which Side Turkey Is On

What Was the Level of U.S. Complicity?

What happened. Turkey claims the Russian plane crossed into Turkish airspace and failed to respond to repeated warnings. Russia claims it can prove its plane was over Syria the whole time. We will see if one version or the other will be generally accepted or whether a contentious muddle will continue indefinitely (cf. MH-17). However, even if the Turkish version prevails, the Russian plane at most would have been over Turkey for a well under a minute and presented no threat to anything or anyone inside Turkey. As stated by Valeriy Burkov, a Russian military pilot and recipient of the Hero of Russia medal: “It’s clear that this was a premeditated action, they were prepared and just waited for a Russian plane to show up. It wasn’t downed because of pilot error, or because he was trigger-happy or whatever. This is preplanned, premeditated action.” That assessment is likely true even if the aircraft passed momentarily into Turkey.

[UPDATE NOV. 27: Not only is it almost certain that Turkey was waiting in ambush to shoot down a Russian plane when the opportunity presented itself, it is increasingly clear [it did so using information provided by Russia to the “US-led coalition” – that is, the United States – as to the Su-24’s flight path](#). Put another way, Russia provided information about its operations to the US as part of a supposed cooperation against ISIS, which information the U.S. then shared with Turkey, which then used the information to shoot down the Su-24. Whether that is the extent of likely US complicity is unknown. For example, did Turkey proceed with its attack after consulting with the coalition – again, meaning the US – or did they proceed on their own without consulting or seeking clearance from anyone? [One of the two Su-24 crew were killed by “moderate” terrorists supported by Turkey \(and the U.S.?\) as they parachuted to safety, a war crime in itself](#). Another Russian, a marine, was reported killed when his rescue helicopter searching for the Su-24 crew was shot down with a US-made TOW missile supplied to the jihadists.]

Motives: While the facts of the incident are murky, the motives on the part of Turkey – and specifically, of President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan – are not. They include:

- ◆ Derailing any possibility of Russia-West accord on Syria and common action against ISIS: [This is Erdoğan’s top goal](#). Since the Paris attacks, there has been a huge growth in Western opinion favoring cooperation with Russia on crushing a common enemy: ISIS. While the fate of Assad remains a sticking point, public opinion, media, and even officials of western governments, especially in Europe, increasingly see the need to worry about ISIS first, Assad later – if at all.
- ◆ Saving ISIS and comparable jihad terror groups: There can now be no doubt that in the confrontation between ISIS, al-Nusra (al-Qaeda), Ahrar ash-Sham, the “Army of Conquest” and the rest of the jihad menagerie against the civilized world, Erdoğan and Turkey are on the side of the former. The canard that Russia is not hurting ISIS, already punctured by the downing of the St. Petersburg airliner in the Sinai, can now be laid to rest. ISIS and Turkey’s other proxies are in danger, and cooperation between Russia and the West could seal their fate. In particular, Turkey needs to keep control of part of its border with Syria to maintain ISIS’s lifeline for oil exports and for the traffic of terrorists in and out of Syria.
- ◆ Cash cow. ISIS’s oil exports depend on access to Turkey, reaping millions for Turkish middlemen. Whether or how Erdoğan’s AK Party and cronies [or [his family](#)] may profit from this trade is not clear, but it would be naïve to rule it out. At the recent G-20 summit in Antalya, Turkey, Russian President Vladimir Putin embarrassed Western leaders – and in particular his host, Erdoğan – by presenting undeniable proof of how ISIS funds itself through oil exports via Turkey. It was only after this that the U.S. joined

in strikes against ISIS oil tanker trucks, something that presumably American intelligence had been aware of already. (Reportedly the U.S., unlike Russia, has given ISIS truck convoys 45 minutes' notice prior to striking them – certainly more consideration than the Su-24 was afforded.)

- ◆ Turkish ground presence in Syria. The Su-24's two-man crew parachuted down into an area controlled by Turkmen militia, which fired on them with small arms as they descended. Their fate is not reliably known. [Russian and Syrian commandos later recovered surviving [Capt. Konstantin Murakhtin. He said there were no warnings from Turkey.](#)] The Turkmen militia, who cooperate with al-Nusra and other jihad groups against the Syrian government and Kurdish militias – both enemies of ISIS – are an essential asset of Ankara's in keeping control of the portion of the border abutting Turkey's Hatay Province. They are controlled by embedded Turkish intelligence officers. The firing on the parachuting Russian crew, irrefutably recorded on video, is a war crime, for which the Turkish government bears command responsibility and criminal accountability. (One online comment on a video of a "militia" commander claiming "credit" for shooting at the Russians asserts that from his accent he is identifiable as a Turk, presumably an intelligence officer, not a local Syrian Turkman. I am unable to confirm this claim.) [In a further aggravating development, a [Russian marine was reported killed](#) when "moderate" Free Syrian Army terrorists shot down a Russian rescue helicopter with a U.S.-supplied TOW missile.]

Western reactions: Mixed. Some media have taken evident glee in the downing of the Russian plane, as stated in one headline: "The Russians had it coming." In his Washington meeting today with French President François Hollande, U.S. President Barack Obama seemingly accepted the Turkish version of events and justified the shutdown, stating that "Turkey, like every country, has a right to defend its territory and its airspace." (One wonders if "any country" includes Syria, whose airspace is violated daily by U.S., French, and other countries' aircraft striking targets without permission from Damascus in support of jihadists seeking to overthrow that country's government.) At an emergency NATO meeting, some skepticism was expressed about Turkey's action: "Diplomats present at the meeting told Reuters that while none of the 28 NATO envoys defended Russia's actions, many expressed concern that Turkey did not escort the Russian warplane out of its airspace." The NATO governments are no doubt aware of Turkey's past provocations against Syria, well before the advent of the Russian air campaign, staging border incidents seeking to trigger a Syrian response that could be depicted as an "attack on Turkey" justifying an Article 5 response. [UPDATE NOV. 26: One American military expert concludes the [Turkish claim does not hold up and is a clear attempt to "NATO-ize" the conflict.](#) Democrat-GOP establishment "[Hillary Christie](#)" may finally get the NATO-Russia clash they crave.]

Russian response: Putin made a harsh statement at Sochi prior to a meeting with King Abdullah of Jordan: “Today's loss is linked to a stab in the back delivered to us by accomplices of terrorists. Today's tragic event will have serious consequences for Russian-Turkish relations.” Some form of retaliation is widely expected. Among the options are energy supply and tourism. Turkey is heavily dependent on Russian gas, but withholding it would hurt Russia financially as well and damage Russia’s reputation as a reliable supplier. Already, there has been some indication that Russians will curtail vacations in Turkey (a popular beach destination, both for price and because Russians don’t need a visa) and of tour companies dropping Turkish vacations packages. Ironically, tourism retaliation primarily will hurt people in Turkish coastal areas, which are generally more secular and Europeanized than central Anatolia – in short, those disadvantaged would be disproportionately Erdoğan opponents, not supporters. Possible military responses include directing intensive airstrikes on Turkmen militia positions [which [appear s already to have begun](#)], with the aim of killing Turkish intelligence personnel; and stepping up supply to and cooperation with Kurdish forces. The latter would be a deft move, given the popularity of the Kurds in the U.S.

[UPDATE Nov. 27: Among Russia’s responses, the big news may turn out to be Moscow’s [deployment in Syria of its state-of-the-art S-400 anti-aircraft missile system](#), which the Russians have long threatened to do but now have finally followed through on, prompted by what they see as Erdoğan’s treachery. Based on the S-400 system’s maximum range, its deployment could allow Russia to declare what in effect would be a no-fly zone that encompasses most of Syria, as well as all of Cyprus, all of Lebanon, and large parts of Israel, Jordan – and Turkey itself.]

MY PLEDGE: If I am selected for the [Republican Vice Presidential nomination](#) and am privileged to assume that august post in January 2017, I pledge to use my considerable influence with President Fill-in-the-blank to (1) break the [pattern of bipartisan American cooperation with jihad terrorists supported by Turkey, Saudi Arabia, and other facilitators of Sunni extremism](#) displayed since the Afghan jihad against the USSR, [through the Balkan wars in the 1990s](#), until the present; and (2) review the U.S. relationship with Turkey with an eye to ending the U.S.-Turkish alliance ([as suggested by Doug Bandow](#)), either by expelling Turkey from NATO or – preferably – [U.S. withdrawal](#) from an alliance that has long outlived its successful defensive purpose and now has become a danger, not least to the United States.

This *TheJIM!gram*[©] is being tweeted to each of the Republican Presidential candidates.

I am pro-life, pro-gun, pro-traditional marriage, pro-immigration control, anti-war, pro-privacy, pro-tax reform, anti-phony ‘free trade’ deals. We need to feel like Americans again!

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If you liked this *TheJIM!gram*®, please endorse me for [Vice President](#) by tweeting with the hashtag **#JimJatrasVeep**. I am more than pleased to answer non-frivolous media questions about issues of public interest. Tweet me at [@JimJatras](#). Contributions to support my issue education and public information activities can be made at [www.repealfatca.com](#), and purchases of my unique phonetic conversion font [www.EurAlfabet.com](#) are appreciated. If you *didn't* like this *TheJIM!gram*®, then just mind your own business.

The **JIM!**

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