In the wake of Turkey’s shoot down of the Russian Su-24, the Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called the attack a planned provocation. He went further on to suggest the US had given Turkey permission to shoot down the Jet. He explained that countries using US manufactured weapons must ask the US for permission before using them in operations. The aircraft used to shoot down the Su-24 was a US-made F-16. Indeed, there is evidence to suggest that not only did the US give Turkey permission, but that it was moving the strings behind the entire operation.

Two Russian aircrafts were attacked that day, but the second was a far less publicised incident. A Russian helicopter was destroyed by the CIA backed FSA using US provided Anti-Tank TOW missiles. The helicopter was on a rescue mission to find the missing Su-24 pilots and the attack resulted in the death of a Russian Marine. Since the US backs the FSA and provided the TOW missiles which were used in the attack, they are at least indirectly responsible, if not outrightly complicit in it. But instead of apologizing to Russia, US state department spokesman Mark Toner defended the actions of the FSA. He also defended the actions of the Turkmen insurgents who shot at the parachuting Russian pilots, a war crime under the first geneva convention. Such an antagonistic position reveals that the US was not displeased by the attacks on Russia.

In the months leading up to the attack, there were several indicators the US knew it would take place. On September 3rd, the families of US staff members were urged to evacuate out of Incirlik air base in Turkey and were given until October 1st to do so. On November 3rd, the US deployed F-15 fighter Jets to Turkey which are specifically designed for air-to-air combat. Since ISIS has no planes, the target could only have been Russian aircrafts. Most significantly, on October 21st, the US and Russia signed a deconfliction protocol, in order to ‘avoid clashes in Syria’s skies’. This entailed giving the US information about where and when Russia will conduct sorties. Russian president Putin suggested this information was passed on to Turkey by the US and used to shoot down the Sukhoi-24.

During the months leading up to the attack, US War hawks were increasingly calling for a direct confrontation with Russia, an act that could lead to a third world War. Several US Presidential candidates, including Hillary Clinton, were effectively calling for a shoot down of a Russian Jet. Some of the more direct comments included,

Chris Christie: “My first phone call would be to Vladimir, and I’d say to him, listen, we’re enforcing this no-fly zone,” adding that he would shoot down Russian warplanes that violate the no-fly zone.

Jeb Bush: “We need to have no fly zones. The argument is, well we’ll get into the conflict with Russia, maybe Russia shouldn’t want to be in conflict with us. I mean, this is a place where American leadership is desperately needed.”

The spokesman for the Zionist Israeli lobbying group AIPAC, Senator John Mccain, suggested arming Al Qaeda Linked Rebels with Anti-Aircraft weapons to shoot down a Russian Jet. An idea which he himself admits was “what we did in Afghanistan many years ago”. The policy which resulted in the birth of Al Qaeda and the rise of the Taliban. Indeed Qatar had been making an effort towards this end. Documents leaked by Russian hackers ‘Cyber Berkut’, revealed that Qatar was negotiating with Ukraine to purchase Anti-Air weapons to help ISIS shoot down a Russian Jet over Syria. It is likely Ukraine refused to sell these weapons, since arming assets which are difficult control could backfire. After all, US Jets are also using those skies. Flooding the region with hand held Anti-Air weapons could pose a threat them in future. Turkey is a far more reliable and controllable proxy which is capable of
shooting down Russian Jets.

Perhaps one of the most significant War hawk statements comes from the Former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski. In an Op-ed for the Financial times Brzezinski suggested that Obama should retaliate if Russia continues to attack U.S. assets in Syria, i.e the Al Qaeda linked rebels. Brzezinski, has experience using Al Qaeda as an asset, having been one of the masterminds behind its creation in Afghanistan. He maintains a great deal of influence and respect in US politics.

It is likely Brzezinski’s dangerous advice to attack Russia was taken on board by US decision makers. But instead of risking a direct conflict with two nuclear powers, Turkey was used as a proxy. Turkey has its own agenda in attacking Russian jets outside of the US’s interests. Turkish president Erdogan has already committed himself to an anti-Assad position far beyond the point of no return. This was over a gas pipeline deal with Qatar that is now looking more like a pipe dream. Russia has been actively fighting not only ISIS, but Al Qaeda and its affiliates who are crucial for Turkey’s plans to overthrow the Syrian government. The Su-24 was bombing the Al Qaeda-linked Turkmen insurgents, before it was shot down.

On October 8, NATO made a statement that it would defend Turkey against Russia, after a Russian jet briefly passed through turkish airspace on its way to bomb targets in Syria. Such statements may have encouraged Erdogan to take the exceptional risk of shooting down a Russian Jet under the assumption that Turkey would be protected by NATO. On November 12th, EU countries committed to pay Turkey 3 billion dollars. Interestingly this is the same amount Turkey is estimated to lose, as a result of Russian sanctions put in place in the wake of the attack. This could have been Part of NATO’s assurance to Erdogan that he would lose nothing by going ahead with the attack.

Erdogan has become increasingly frustrated, even after four years of war, the Syrian state shows no sign of collapse. It might not have been too difficult for the US to convince the desperate Turkish leader that attacking a super power was in his best interest.

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