
Moscow summons Belgian ambassador, presents data on F-16s bombing of Syrian civilians

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Russia's Foreign Ministry said in a statement that it has presented Alex Van Meeuwen, Belgium's ambassador in Moscow, with evidence proving the involvement of Belgian Air Force jets in a recent airstrike on a Syrian village that killed four civilians.

The Russian Foreign Ministry summoned Van Meeuwen on Friday.

"During the conversation with Van Meeuwen, First Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Titov said that Moscow was puzzled by Belgium's ongoing denial of the fact that the Belgian Air Force carried out an airstrike that killed civilians on the outskirts of Aleppo on October 18 of this year," the Russian Foreign Ministry said in [a statement](#).

"The Belgian diplomat [Van Meeuwen] was presented with evidence showing involvement of the Belgian Air Force in the airstrike on the village of Hassadjek. It was also mentioned that detailed info on the technical aspects of the flight of the two F-16 jets had been given to Belgium's military attaché in Moscow by the Russian Ministry of Defense."

Read more [Radar data proves Belgian F-16s attacked village near Aleppo, killing 6 - Russia](#)

"This [Friday] afternoon, the Russian Federation Ministry of Defense handed over to the Defense Attaché of the Belgian Embassy in Moscow the alleged evidence designed to show that F-16 jets of the Belgian Air Force are responsible for the airstrike near Aleppo in the early hours of October 18, which resulted in several deaths among civilians. This alleged evidence is a map with the route of the flight allegedly made by Belgian aircraft," a communique posted on the Belgian Ministry of Defense website said.

"The numbers of the identification friend-or-foe system, which are marked on the map and which, according to the Russian Ministry of Defense, are assigned to the Belgian aircraft, are incorrect and in no way are the numbers of the Belgian Air Force aircraft," the document says.

Brussels is using "worthless excuses" in an attempt to divert public attention from the airstrike on the Syrian village, Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov said on Friday.

"Attempts by the Belgian Defense Minister [Steven Vandeput] to divert public attention from the tragedy, using obviously worthless excuses, causes profound confusion. It speaks of either Mr Vandeput's misunderstanding of the document provided by Russia, or the desire of the US Armed Forces Central Command, responsible for providing targeting data to aircraft of the international coalition in Syria, to evade responsibility for the death of six Syrian civilians, killed in the airstrike," Konashenkov told journalists.

Belgian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Didier Vanderhasselt told Interfax on Friday the ministry is not yet aware of the content of its ambassador's conversation with Russia's deputy foreign minister, and is waiting for the results of the meeting. "We maintain dialogue with the Russian side, we need to know exactly what was said at this meeting," he added.

"We are also surprised by the fact that we have not been provided with the data before," Vanderhasselt is cited as saying by Interfax. "Our military gave all the explanations to the military attaché of the Russian Embassy in Belgium yesterday [Thursday] morning," he added.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman General Igor Konashenkov said on Thursday that Brussels' obstinate denial of involvement shows that Belgian Defense Minister Steven Vandeput is either *"deliberately deceiving people in Belgium and around the world, or his subordinates and the Americans are lying to the leadership of Belgium."*

The airstrike on the village of Hassadjek in Syria's Aleppo province reportedly killed six civilians on Tuesday.

According to Konashenkov, the two Belgian F-16s were immediately identified by Russian and Syrian air defense radar and all of their movements were tracked.

"Every aircraft type has a unique identifiable signature," he noted.

The warplanes, which had flown in from the Muwaffaq Salti Airbase in Jordan, delivered their night strike on the village at 00:35 GMT, about two hours after takeoff, leaving six civilians dead and four injured, the general said. Russia tracked the flight of the two planes from Jordan to Iraq and Syria, as well as their meeting with a US KC-135 tanker, which refueled them over the Deir ez-Zor area, Konashenkov said, adding that the US-led coalition hadn't informed Russia about the Belgian flights.
