Russia Blames Israel After Syria Nearly Shoots Down Airliner

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A Tehran-Damascus flight almost ended up "in the zone of deadly anti-aircraft rocket and artillery fire," the Defense Ministry said. **Maxim Shipenkov / EPA / TASS**

A civilian aircraft with 172 passengers on board made an emergency landing at the Russia-controlled Khmeimim airbase early Thursday after Syria's air defense nearly hit it, Russia's Defense Ministry was [reported](#) to have said.

The Syrian air defense was trying to repulse an Israeli attack near Damascus, Interfax said Friday. Syria's defense ministry said earlier that its air defenses had intercepted Israeli missiles; the Israeli military declined to comment.

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Four Israeli F-16 fighter jets struck eight air-to-ground missiles near Damascus without entering Syrian airspace after 2 a.m. local time, Interfax cited Russia's Defense Ministry spokesman as saying.

A Tehran–Damascus flight almost ended up "in the zone of deadly anti-aircraft rocket and artillery fire" during the missile strikes, the spokesman, Igor Konashenkov, said.

"Air warfare with the use of civilian aircraft as cover against Syrian air-defense forces' response is becoming the Israeli air force's distinctive feature," Konashenkov was quoted as saying.

He blamed Israel for "caring nothing about putting the lives of hundreds of innocent civilians at risk."

The attacks by Israeli jets were launched over the Golan Heights and Lebanese air space in two waves, one near Damascus and another near the Deraa and Quneitra provinces, according to a Syrian ministry statement carried by state media.

It said Syrian air defenses downed a large number of missiles but that the attack had caused material damage and injured eight "fighters," without specifying their nationality.

Israel has repeatedly bombed Iranian-backed militia targets in Syria, saying its goal was to end Tehran's military presence there, which Western intelligence sources say has expanded in recent years.

Russia similarly blamed Israel in 2018 for the downing of its intelligence plane by Syrian government forces, which killed 15 Russian servicemen on board.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.