

Articles & Op-Eds

Some Russian Commentators Are Holding Putin and Assad Responsible for Plane Downing

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In the country's narrowing independent press, experts are casting doubt on claims of Israeli culpability—and stirring questions about why Russians continue to die in Syria.

On September 17, a Syrian S-200 battery accidentally shot down a Russian Ilyushin Il-20 reconnaissance plane, killing all 15 Russian service members onboard. Moscow holds Israel responsible, claiming that Israel put the Russian aircraft in the line of fire even if ultimately these events were a "series of tragic mistakes," as Russian president Vladimir Putin was quick to note. Israel holds the Assad regime responsible. Russian-Syrian cooperation on a tactical level was always fraught with operational problems, and it's likely that the two sides had difficulties de-conflicting in this particular incident. Nor is it surprising that to save face, the Russian government blamed someone else for its own incompetence, and that of its ally. But what do the Russian people think?...

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