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Turkey to take action against Syria: Turkish deputy premier

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Turkey plans to take 'punitive measures' against Syria over the downing of a Turkish fighter jet by the Syrian army as the warplane was flying, according to Damascus, in Syrian airspace.

Speaking after a seven-hour cabinet meeting on Monday, Turkish Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arinc said that Turkey is “doing everything we can to protect our rights in the framework of the international law, but everyone should know that these actions will not go unpunished and will have consequences.”

The Turkish deputy prime minister also said that Ankara seeks to classify the Friday jet incident under NATO’s Article 5 in order to convince NATO to regard the incident as an ‘attack’ on the whole Western military alliance when the organization’s ambassadors meet at Turkey’s request to discuss the issue on Tuesday .

However, he added “we have no intention of going at war with anyone.”

Syria on Friday said that a Turkish fighter jet, a F-4 Phantom, was downed in Syrian territorial waters west of the village of Om al-Tuyour in Lattakia Province, 10 kilometers from the beach.

Damascus stressed that it had engaged the jet in the Syrian airspace “according to the laws that govern such situations.”

Ankara had earlier said that its military lost radar and radio contact with the jet over the Mediterranean after it took off from Erhac Airport in the eastern Turkish province of Malatya.

The Turkish military provided no details about the mission of the jet.

Arinc also said that Ankara, which has repeatedly threatened to cut power supplies to Syria, will decide to cut the electricity exports to the Arab country in the coming days.

The Turkish official, whose remarks come on the eve of the NATO meeting, claimed that the Syrian forces had opened ground fire on a Turkish search-and-rescue plane right after the downing of the fighter jet. However, he did not say whether the plane was hit.

Damascus has not yet commented on this particular claim.

This comes as US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has pledged to 'hold Syria responsible' for the Friday incident.

Syrian Foreign Ministry spokesman Jihad Makdissi on Monday warned NATO against conspiring with Turkey against Damascus on the downing of the Turkish fighter jet by Syria.

"If the goal of the [NATO] meeting (on Tuesday) is to calm the situation and promote stability, we wish it success," Makdissi told a news conference in Damascus, adding, however, that "if the goal of the meeting is aggression, we say that Syrian airspace, territory and waters are sacred for the Syrian army, just as Turkish airspace, territory and waters are sacred for the Turkish army."