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Conflicting Reports as Russian Jet Intercepts Israeli Warplanes Along Syria Border

By Jason Ditz

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In the days leading up to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's visit to Moscow, Israeli media outlets are now reporting on an incident along the Syrian border in which a Russian jet intercepted one or more Israeli warplanes.

There are several conflicting accounts on the matter, with some saying the incident was on the Israel-Syria border and others suggesting it was on Syria's coast, which would put the incident on the Lebanon border. Either way, the reports insist that the situation didn't escalate into any sort of "confrontation."

Which on the one hand has some Israeli officials citing the coordination between Israel and Russia as successful, but raises questions about why, if they are coordinating so successfully, Russia felt the need to intercept Israeli planes in the first place.

Israeli overflights of Syria aren't unusual, and indeed Israeli attacks on Syria are fairly common, without Russian interference. If the incident happened on the coast, however, as some reports claim, it would put Israeli planes near the Russian naval base at Tartus, which Russia might interpret as provocative action. Whatever the case, this was likely a topic of discussion for Netanyahu's visit.