

Islamic State claims to behead alleged Russian spy in new video

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Moscow: The Islamic State group on Wednesday released a video in which a Russian-speaking man confesses to spying for Russia's security service and then is shown apparently being beheaded by another Russian-speaking man.

The authenticity of the video or the claims in it could not immediately be confirmed and there was no comment from Russia's Foreign Ministry or its FSB security service. There was also no indication when and where the video was produced.

Russia on Sept. 30 launched airstrikes in Syria that it says are focused on ISIS fighters and the illegal oil trade that funds them. However, critics in both Syria and abroad claim that Russia is heavily targeting other rebel groups not affiliated with ISIS, in order to back up the forces of longtime Moscow ally Syrian President Bashar Assad.

ISIS claimed responsibility for bombing a Russian airliner shortly after it took off from the Egyptian resort of Sharm al-Sheikh in mid-October, killing all 224 people aboard.

The video begins with a graphic in Arabic and Russian, saying "You will be conquered and humiliated, O Russians."

Then a bearded man appearing to be in his late 20s is shown speaking from a chair. He says he is from Chechnya, identifies himself as Magomed Khasayev and says he is a spy sent to ISIS-held territories with orders from Russian intelligence to identify fighters who seek to return to the Caucasus region to carry out attacks.

He says he was pressured into working for the FSB, to report on Russians who had gone to fight with the Islamic State. He says he traveled to Turkey and then was sent by an ISIS recruiter to Iraq, and had contacts with his Russian intelligence handler, but was arrested by ISIS.

The video then shifts to showing the man kneeling on a beach while another man stands behind him, delivering a speech to Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The man, brandishing a knife, says in Russian, "Listen to me, Putin, you dog" and declaring that Russians will be killed in retaliation for Russia's airstrikes in Syria against ISIS. The man then places his large knife against the prisoner's throat and appears to begin decapitating him.

In the wake of the Russian airliner bombing and the November terror attacks in Paris, Moscow has publicly declared determination to defeat ISIS and has pushed for international cooperation toward that goal.

However, Russia's Syria operation took a blow last week, when Turkey shot down a Russian warplane that it said had violated Turkey's airspace. Russia hotly denies any airspace violation and has announced an array of sanctions against Turkey, including a ban on fruits and vegetables from Turkey and halting the sale of package tours to Turkey; Russians are an important component in Turkey's tourist industry.

Russia's Caucasus region has been hit by Islamist insurgencies for two decades, including two full-scale wars in Chechnya. The ISIS is believed to find the Caucasus a productive region for recruiting fighters.

- AP