

Russian destroyer wards off Turkish fishing ship in Aegean

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Moscow: A Russian destroyer used small arms fire on Sunday to ward off a Turkish fishing ship and prevent a collision in the Aegean Sea, the Defense Ministry said, calling the actions of Turkey's vessel "provocative."

The guided missile destroyer Smetlivy was unable to establish radio contact with the approaching Turkish seiner, which also failed to respond to visual signals and flares, the ministry said in a statement. So when the Koroglu Balikcilik was 600 meters (660 yards) away, warning shots were fired from the destroyer and the Turkish ship quickly changed course, passing within 540 meters (590 yards).

Tensions between Moscow and Ankara have been heightened since a Turkey downed a Russian warplane along the Syrian border last month, and this could further strain relations.

The Defense Ministry summoned the Turkish defense attache in Moscow over what it described as the "provocative actions" of the Turkish ship.

Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov informed Turkish Rear Adm. Ahmet Gunes of "the possible harmful consequences of the reckless actions of Ankara in regard to the Russian military contingent fighting international terrorism in Syria," the ministry said in a statement.

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu, speaking to Turkish reporters on the sidelines of a meeting on Libya in Rome, said Turkey would get the Turkish fishing ship's side of the story before making an announcement on the issue, but added that Turkey doesn't favor an escalation of tensions.

"We don't want tensions. We want to overcome tensions through dialogue," Cavusoglu said.

The incident occurred in the northern part of the Aegean, about 22 kilometers (13 miles) from the Greek island of Lemnos, the Russian ministry said.

- AP