

Pentagon accuses Russia of targeting US-British Special Forces base in Syria

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Unnamed United States officials issued provocative anti-Russian accusations last week, claiming that Russian airstrikes deliberately targeted a base used by American and British Special Forces in June. The outpost, located in a remote area of southern Syria, was occupied by 20 British commandos just hours before being destroyed by Russian jets, the unnamed sources told the *Wall Street Journal*.

Russian jets launched a second round of strikes within 90 minutes, defying Pentagon warnings to Russian counterparts that the facility was being used by Western forces, according to anonymous military-intelligence sources cited by the *Wall Street Journal*. Russian pilots reportedly failed to respond to repeated messages transmitted over special frequencies set up to coordinate activities between the US and Russian militaries and avoid precisely such a scenario.

The Russian military maintains that it struck the base in error, believing it to be occupied by fighters with Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS). Pentagon officials have rejected this explanation, claiming that distinctive fortifications used by Western militaries would have made clear to the Russians the nature of outpost.

Days later, Russian strikes destroyed another base used by the CIA to coordinate Washington's destabilization campaign against the Syrian government, according to the *Wall Street Journal*.

Moscow's targeting of the NATO-linked facilities was intended to pressure the US-led coalition into a military cooperation deal over Syria, the US military-intelligence sources said. The Obama administration has started US-Russian talks in the weeks since the strikes, yet the alleged attacks have also deepened divisions within the Obama administration and fueled the opposition of hardline elements within the Pentagon

and CIA to any deal with Moscow over Syria.

Despite public optimism from the administration over a possible deal, factions within the US and NATO establishments remain ferociously hostile to even the slightest compromise with Moscow. They are determined to press forward with an agenda of confronting and rolling back Russian interests and strategic positions, not only in Eastern Europe, but also in the Middle East and throughout the former Soviet sphere.

In comments to Reuters this weekend, US and European officials expressed opposition to the US-Russian military cooperation pact proposed by the Obama administration.

"The Russians' aim in Syria is still either keeping Assad in power or finding some successor who is acceptable to them," an unnamed US official said. "Putin has proved over and over again, and not just in Syria, that he cannot be trusted to honor any agreement he makes if he decides it's no longer in Russia's interest."

For its part, the Obama White House supports a US-Russian military deal not from a genuine desire for peace and cooperation with the Putin government, but rather as a tactical maneuver to reign in the Syrian government's offensive against US-backed militias in the country's northern Aleppo province.

The US-backed forces, primarily Islamist extremist formations, have been mobilized by Washington since 2011 in an effort to install a US puppet government in Damascus and establish American control over the strategic Russian ally.

During the past year, Russian-backed offensives by the Damascus government have largely defeated the American-backed opposition, threatening the entire US strategy with catastrophe.

“By getting the US in the same tactical room Moscow would then have to guarantee that Assad’s planes stopped bombing,” a European diplomat said in comments to Reuters Sunday. “Kerry is optimistic, but we’re not sure Russia is serious.”

The proposed US-Russian pact, whether or not it actually emerges, is not the central issue. There will never be a progressive resolution in Syria outside of an international working class revolution against imperialism. The American political establishment is united around a program of aggressive militarism aimed at dominating the entire globe and subjugating Russia, China and any potential European challengers.

In the Middle East, the Pentagon is planning major escalations of the war in Syria, Iraq and Libya with the support of both US presidential hopefuls, Democrat Hillary Clinton and Republican Donald Trump, and the political cliques they represent.

Any potential deal with Russia will be rendered meaningless in the wake of the 2016 US elections in November, when Washington plans to step up its bombing campaign and deploy new ground forces to Syria. As the evidence that US, British and Russian forces are already exchanging tit-for-tat strikes makes clear, the Obama administration cannot even guarantee that another major escalation of the war will be postponed until after the election.

American imperialism has orchestrated five years of relentless military violence in Syria, laying waste to yet another of the Middle East’s most advanced societies. Stalled and frustrated at the failure of its efforts to topple Bashar al-Assad, Washington is now preparing to further escalate a proxy struggle against Russia that contains the seeds of a direct clash between NATO and Russia, potentially sparking a world war between nuclear armed powers.



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