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Russia, Iran, Iraq & Syria Setting Up 'Joint Information Center' to Coordinate Anti-ISIS Operations

By RT
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Russia, Iran, Iraq and Syria have agreed to establish a joint information center in Baghdad to coordinate their operations against Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIL/ISIS) militants, according to sources.

"The main goal of the center will be gathering, processing and analyzing current information about the situation in the Middle East – primarily for fighting IS," a military-diplomatic source told Russian news agencies on Saturday.

The information center in the Iraqi capital will be headed by an officer of one of the founding countries on a rotating basis. Rotation will take place every three months. According to the source, Iraq will run the center for the next three months.

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Russia, Iran, Iraq and Syria may also use the information center to coordinate anti-IS combat plans, the source said, adding that the agreement is a milestone for uniting the region's countries in the war on terrorism – primarily on Islamic State militants.

The Iraqi army's joint operations command confirmed the agreement on Saturday, saying that it came with *"increased Russian concern about the presence of thousands of terrorists from Russia undertaking criminal acts with Daesh [Islamic State],"* Reuters reported.

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Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Jaafari announced in New York on Friday that Iraq has not received any Russian military advisers to assist Baghdad's operations.

On Friday, the US TV-Channel Fox News reported the four countries were establishing a *"coordination cell"* in Baghdad, but Dmitry Peskov, spokesman for Vladimir Putin, denied this. *"We have already said there are many reports which are not true,"*he told news agencies.

Recent media reports indicate Russia is boosting its cooperation with Syria and other Middle East countries in the fight against terrorism.

Western media say Russia is sending warplanes and tanks to Syria and building a military base in Latakia, but Russian officials deny this, saying Moscow is continuing to supply Syria with weapons in accordance with bilateral contracts.

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> — RT (@RT_com) September 9, 2015

"Russia has never made a secret of military-technical cooperation with Syria. Our country has long been supplying weapons and military equipment to Syria under the existing bilateral contracts," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in a statement on September 9.

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Syria hopes that Russia's counter-terror policy will be more effective than the US-led anti-IS coalition.

"Moscow is acting within the framework of international law, respecting the sovereignty of our country and in coordination with Syria," Syrian Foreign Minister Walid Muallem told RT. *"We do not hide anything under the table. We regard Russia as our friend and strategic ally which is honest in its actions."*

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Russia has long insisted on the creation of an international anti-terrorist coalition, to coordinate the efforts with the Syrian Army in combating the jihadists on the ground.

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