

Russia's Surgical Strikes in Syria: 80 Military Targets including Terrorist Command Posts, ISIS Training Camps, Ammunition Depots

By [Vladimir Kozin](#)

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For almost a week Russian military jets are carrying out effective surgical strikes on the military targets of terrorist groups [Daesh](#) (Arabic acronym for IS), the Islamic Front, Jaish al-Fatah, Jaish al-Haramoun, and other Al-Qaeda-like conglomerates in Syria.

Over the past days, Russian warplanes have flown more than 100 air raids, hitting around 80 military targets. The air strikes hit command posts, ammunition and fuel depots, terrorist training camps, heavy weapons, and munitions factories. Russian pilots have already and quite successfully used a concrete-penetrator bombs "BETAB-500" and satellite-guided "KAB-500" bombs against hardened targets. The Russian air forces are carefully respecting, and will continue to respect, one fundamental rule: no attacks on civilian targets or Syrian civilians. Based on objective data from satellite intelligence, as well as statements by senior Syrian leaders, not a single civilian in the country has been harmed during Russia's bombing campaign of militant targets.

Strength, mission and aims

According to official data from the Russian Defense Ministry, the Russian air forces consist of 50 combat aircraft and helicopters. The total military contingent deployed at Hmeymim airbase near Tartus and at Naval facility near Latakia does not exceed 3,000 men. Compare this figure with the NATO forces' strength in Afghanistan during the acme of their presence – 130,000 GIs or with October-November 2015 NATO military drills in Southern Europe code-named "[Trident Juncture](#)" involving 36,000 troops. Russia assured that no Russian soldier will be deployed to fight alongside Syrian Army on the ground.



This is only one-fourth of the arsenal Russia deployed during the peacekeeping operation in Georgia in 2008 when that country was engaged in armed aggression against South Ossetia. And, in another example, this is only one-twentieth of the number of warplanes flown by NATO countries during their massive bombardment of the former Yugoslavia in 1999, which was conducted without authorization from the UN Security Council and without any request to do so from Yugoslavia's leaders – a campaign during which homes, schools, hospitals, bridges, and television stations were subjected to indiscriminate bombing.

Unlike NATO's air force, which launched massive air strikes over Yugoslavia in 1999 (during which the Chinese embassy in Belgrade was hit, and even the building housing the UN office in the city of Priština in Kosovo was damaged), Russian aircraft in Syria use precisely

verified information about the location of Islamic State military targets, employing data collected from military aircraft and satellites, intelligence gathered from the Syrian, Iranian, and Iraqi armed forces, as well as making active use of drones to obtain photo and video images of the location.

When the American, French, and Australian air forces delivered their air strikes over Syria, they never adapted their efforts to coordinate with the military of the Syrian Arab Republic. On the contrary, using the rationale that an IS armed group “needs to be punished,” those Western warplanes dropped their bombs and missiles on the Syrian armed forces as well as on the country’s civilians. And in order to protect their own protégés within IS, the leading Western states even invented the term “the moderate opposition,” who are to be seen as inviolable. Of course their “moderation” has long been the butt of many [jokes](#).

It should be kept in mind that Moscow has a legal basis for conducting its anti-terrorist operation in Syria, since Syrian President Bashar al-Assad was legitimately elected and has asked Russia’s leaders to provide the Syrian people with immediate military and technical assistance. Was such a request justified? Of course it was. IS militants and other anti-government groups have already seized 60% of that country. Currently many Syrian cities look more like Stalingrad, which lay in smoking ruins after WWII. Militants have already reached the suburbs of Damascus ...

Russia’s military air support for Syria was the object of an agreement between two sovereign UN members. It has been provided in accordance with the most basic, inherent right to individual or collective self-defense, as stipulated in Article 51 of the UN Charter.

The Russian military air campaign, unofficially named as Operation Hmeymim, will also be limited in its duration. Judging by the efficacy of the air strikes that have already landed on the military targets and buildings of the emergent “Caliphate,” it could all be over in a month or two, when the entire catalogue of the 450-500 terrorist military targets are wiped out by the sophisticated all-weather combat fighter-bombers Su-34 “Fullback”, Su-24M “Fencer” and Su-25 “Frogfoot” fully modernized and equipped with high-tech precision-guided munitions so that the civilians and their infrastructure are out of danger.

First, technically it is quite possible to avoid any undesirable “collateral damage”: all aircraft are fitted with cutting-edge precision strike weapons – the circular error probable (CEP) of the Russian newly developed air-dropped guided bombs is less than 5 meters from the center of any potential military target while air-launched KH-25 laser-guided missiles have CEP less than 2 meters.

Second, all terrorist military installations are chosen upon carefully gathered data by electronic and human intelligence, including air surveillance and drone observation, gathered and verified by Russia and Syria, and in coordination with Iraqi and Iranian military personnel currently assembled at Bagdad Information Center. All four nations share equal rights and responsibilities stemming from this interoperability. Syrian Ambassador to Russia Riad Haddad confirmed that the Syrian Army had the exact grids and geographic coordinates of extremist group assets scattered in the country.

Once terrorist military installations are irreparably damaged, the Operation Hmeymim will come to a complete halt.



Chart of the Russian military operations in Syria, Oct 2015

From September 30th till October 5th, 2015 there have not any official reports from the Syrian Government that there have been any casualties amongst civilian population. No governmental or public buildings, no schools or hospitals have been destroyed (unlike a hospital in Kunduz, Northern Afghanistan, [that was hit by the U.S. aircraft on October 3rd](#) where 19 people have been killed and 37 - heavy wounded).

As the result of these carefully planned attacks the rebels are deserting from their strongholds *en mass* with an uninterrupted panic sweeping their ranks, Russian General Staff [reported](#) October 3rd. So far nearly 700 armed men from radical groups have laid their arms and surrendered to the Syrian troops in Deraa 110 km from Damascus after the air raids began September 30th. There are reports that rebels have ceased resistance in some other areas.

“Russia’s entry into this struggle [with IS], with its [Russia’s] potential and opportunities ... will contribute to reduction of the terrorism in Syria, and its eradication,” Sameh Shoukry, Egypt’s Foreign Minister, [said in an interview with the Saudi “Al Arabiya”](#) broadcaster.

Air sorties will be intensified

General Colonel Andrey Kartapolov, the Head of the Main Operational Department, Russian General Staff, said October 3rd in the newly-enacted state-of-the art National Defense Command Center that Moscow plans even to intensify its air power mission in Syria. It is a logic option.

A US-led international coalition comprised of 60 nations has been pounding IS targets in Syria for over a year, but the lack of coordination with Damascus stalled the progress: Allies receive no intelligence on the IS targets from the ground, while the regular Syrian army gets no chance of benefiting from U.S. air support. As Russian MP Alexei Pushkov put it: the Western coalition has been bombing non-populated desert areas or dummy barracks day in-day out with no results. It looks like that the U.S.-led Western coalition simply imitated the activity versus IS.

More than that: the coalition has been bombing Syria without getting advice and consent from the UN Security Council or from the Syrian Government. It is a gross violation of the UN Charter. On the other hand Moscow is militarily acting in Syria in accordance of the Article 51 of the UN Charter on individual and collective defense, because it was asked by Damascus to do so when the existence of the Syrian nation was at stake. It is a striking difference between what some Western and Arab nations have done in Syria so far and what Russia is doing today.

Last week, the Turkish Foreign Ministry released a [statement](#) calling on Russia to stop air strikes against Syrian opposition factions and civilians, and to focus its efforts on the fight against Islamic State militants. The statement expressing “concerns” was endorsed by France, Germany, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the United Kingdom and the United States. But are these nations capable to suppress IS without Russia? No, they are not.

How can France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States can do it in general terms? If they financially, militarily and morally are extending helping hand to that quasi-

Islamic “caliphate” with the only purpose: to oust Bashar al-Assad from his presidential post at any cost however high it is, even at the expense of creating additional influx of “refugees of war” to the European continent. In what way Qatar and Saudi Arabia will do it if they supply IS with money and weapons? No, they cannot. But, instead of expressing “[concerns](#)” they might join in an emerging *bona fide* coalition to resist a menace of IS that is still alive, though already suffered immensely.

Warning and perspective

In these circumstances it is very strange [to hear voices to supply “moderate” IS members with MANPADS](#) to shoot down Russian aircraft. But are those IS terrorists heavily equipped with weapons and beheading their captive people or burning them alive really “moderate”? No, all of them are “non-moderates”, and therefore must not be backed with any type of weaponry. As a high-ranking Russian military official told the RISS, Moscow will react strongly if it finds out that any MANPADS are given by any state to IS militants or to any other subversive elements in the Middle East. The USA has already assured Moscow that it would not transfer such systems to IS. Nobody should forget that IS has got chemical warfare agents as well.

✘ The Kremlin does not conceal the main aim of its military operation in Syria: The aim of Russia’s air campaign is to prepare the ground for offensive by the Syrian regular army and allied Syrian armed opposition forces who hope to regain control of IS-infested lands and restore peace and stability in the country.

Russia will welcome any assistance from the outside world in suppressing this highly virulent disease. It will be a strong backer of Bashar al-Assad as a single leader in Syria who can actually save it from a nation-wide collapse facing large-scale terrorist threat. Therefore, Moscow will not accept any interference into Russo-Syrian affairs. In other words: either cooperation with Russia, Syria, Iran and Iraq or abstention from any wrong-doing to undermine their interaction.

Russians and Syrians believe: sooner or later Syria will again become peaceful and stable.

Vladimir Kozin is Head of Advisers’ Group at the Russian Institute for Strategic Studies, Member of the Russian Academy of Natural Sciences and Professor of the Academy of Military Sciences of the Russian Federation.

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