

Saudi Arabia 'Ready to Send Ground Troops' to Syria

By [The New Arab](#)

Global Research, February 22, 2017

[The New Arab](#) 21 February 2017

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Saudi Arabia's foreign minister has said the kingdom is prepared to send ground troops to Syria to fight the Islamic State group [IS], as US Senator John McCain met with the Saudi King.

Adel al-Jubeir [told](#) the *German Press Agency* on Tuesday that Saudi forces could battle IS alongside US special forces assisting US-backed Kurdish-Arab fighters.

The minister said the aim of the deployment would be to ensure that "liberated areas did not fall under the control of Hizballah, Iran or the regime," adding that recaptured areas could be handed over to rebels.

Jubeir has recently [expressed](#) optimism that US President Donald Trump will be more engaged in the region, particularly in containing Iran which backs Bashar al-Assad's regime in Syria and the Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Last February, a Saudi military spokesman [said](#) the kingdom was ready to send ground troops to Syria provided coalition leaders agreed.

Ahmed Asiri said that Saudi Arabia has taken part in coalition airstrikes against IS since the US-led campaign began in September 2014, but could now provide ground troops.

Jubeir [said](#) at the time that the US had welcomed the plan to deploy Saudi ground troops.

Saudi Arabia has long provided military and financial support to rebels fighting Syrian President Bashar al-Assad.

In December, the US [announced](#) that some 200 US troops would be sent to Syria to help a Kurdish and Arab fighters seize the IS bastion of Raqqa.

The new batch of fighters complemented 300 US special forces already in Syria to assist the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces [SDF].

Also on Tuesday, influential US Senator John McCain, a critic of Trump, held talks with Saudi Arabia's King Salman.

McCain, who chairs the Senate Armed Services Committee, arrived in Riyadh after talks on Syria with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The *Saudi Press Agency* [gave no details](#) of McCain's meeting at Salman's office, except to

say that the friendly ties between their two countries were discussed.

McCain's visit comes two days before Syria's government and the opposition gather in Geneva on Thursday for a new round of United Nations-brokered talks aimed at ending six years of fighting.

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