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U.S.-Russia Clash In Syria: The Beginning of World War 3

By: Polina Tikhonova
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With Russia admitting it is bombing U.S.-trained rebels in Syria, there is the alarming high risk of a military clash between U.S. and Russian forces over Syria's crowded airspace.



Washington and Moscow officials make attempts to coordinate their actions in Syria to de-escalate the tense situation in the region, but these attempts have not borne fruit since Wednesday.

If officials fail to ensure that American and Russian air forces do not encounter one another during overlapping airstrikes in Syria, there is a high risk of a ‘one-thing-led-to-another’ scenario, which may unleash the World War 3.

Ever since Russia started bombing Syria on Wednesday, the Kremlin warned Washington to not fly U.S. warplanes in Syria without providing any geographical information about exact positions it planned to strike.

The U.S. refused to comply with the request and the American air campaign in Syria is continuing as usual.

The high possibility of a military clash between U.S. and Russian forces in Syria became apparent after the Pentagon confirmed Russia is not targeting exclusively ISIS targets as it claims to be.

A number of reports from U.S.-backed Syrian rebels, including groups linked to the CIA-trained Free Syrian Army, indicate that Russia targets their positions with deadly airstrikes.

The U.S. and its allies, including some Persian Gulf states are attacking areas held by ISIS militants, while Russia and the forces of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad target areas held by rebel groups, which want Assad removed from power.

Therefore, accidentally or otherwise, a clash between U.S. and Russian forces is of high possibility, which is why U.S. officials urge Moscow to coordinate their actions in Syria.

Russia and U.S. attempt to ‘deconflict’ the situation

Washington and Moscow military officials conducted a video conference to discuss pilot distress signals, language issues and other precautionary measures to reduce the risk of Russian and American aircraft encountering one another over the Syrian airspace, according to Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook.

“International frequencies that can be used at a time of distress...conversation between aircraft, what language would it be in...Those are some of the questions that we are trying to address...so that there isn’t a misjudgment or miscalculation in the air,” Cook told reporters on Thursday.

The talks between U.S. and Russian military officials to reach a compromise regarding next steps on deconfliction efforts will continue within the coming days, Cook added.

Cook also noted that “at this point” Washington is only reviewing proposals and is not planning to share intelligence with Moscow to avoid miscalculations as both sides conduct overlapping airstrikes in Syria.

Russia admits targeting U.S.-trained rebels in Syria

Russia carries out a second day of airstrikes in Syria, in which at least 36 people have been killed, including five women and six children, according to rebel opposition groups.

Russian aircraft began dropping bombs in Syria hours after Russian President Vladimir Putin pushed a measure through the upper house of the Russian parliament approving the use of Russian military forces abroad.

According to Russian officials, the vote came after a request by Syrian President Bashar al-Assad for military assistance in fighting ISIS targets.

However, according to numerous reports by rebel groups and U.S. surveillance, it's not exclusively ISIS whom Russia is bombing in Syria, but also U.S.-backed rebels in coordination with the Assad regime.

And although during his talks with French president Francois Hollande, Putin insisted that Moscow was targeting exclusively ISIS in Syria, there are indications that contradict his words.

Russian defense ministry gives wrong info about positions

The Russian defense ministry issued a statement saying it hit 12 ISIS targets, but as it was later verified, it turned out that ISIS militants actually did not hold the areas, which Moscow claims were held by ISIS.

Syrian activists have been reporting that allegedly Russian airstrikes hit their camps in the north and center of Syria, including in the province of Hama, in which Russian aircraft targeted areas held by U.S.-backed rebel group called Tajamu al-Izzah.

With Putin insisting Russia carries out airstrikes exclusively against ISIS militants, his own spokesman Dmitry Peskov contradicted his words, saying that Russia was also targeting other organizations in addition to ISIS.

"These organizations are well known and the targets are chosen in coordination with the armed forces of Syria," Peskov told the AP on Thursday.

The commander of an FSA-affiliated group confirmed Thursday that two allegedly Russian airstrikes hit a camp held by the group, which had received training from the CIA in Qatar and Saudi Arabia.

Russia-Syria-Iran-Hezbollah alliance brings us closer to the World War 3?

It was reported that hundreds of Iranian troops arrived in Syria 10 days ago along with weaponry to launch ground combat operations on rebel-held areas in the north of the country.

Lebanon's Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran and has been fighting alongside the Assad regime since the beginning of the conflict, told Reuters on Thursday that it is preparing to join the operation as well.

"The [Russian] airstrikes will in the near future be accompanied by ground advances by the Syrian army and its allies," said one of the sources, according to Reuters.

The planned ground combat operations alongside the Syrian army will go hand in hand with Russian airstrikes to regain the control over the Northern-Western part of Syria, which Assad's opponents gained earlier this year.

We see an emerging alliance between Russia, Iran, Hezbollah, and the Assad regime, which will likely get other Middle Eastern countries involved into the war over Syria. And maybe not just Middle Eastern countries, which raises concerns that we are standing on the verge of the World War 3.

"The vanguard of Iranian ground forces began arriving in Syria: soldiers and officers specifically to participate in this battle. They are not advisors ... we mean hundreds with equipment and weapons. They will be followed by more," the second source told Reuters, adding that Iraqis would also join the ground combat operation in Syria.