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Scope of Russian War in Syria Growing, Officials Admit

By Jason Ditz
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When Russia formally joined the Syrian Civil War, Foreign Affairs Committee head Alexei Pushkov sought to reassure the public that it wouldn't be a protracted affair, saying the government expected the war against ISIS to last 3-4 months at most.

The comments were seen as aiming to reassure the Russian public, which hasn't seen a major overseas conflict in decades, that the war would be short and simple. Today, officials are starting to admit that that's not the case, and that the war is going to be broader in scope and much longer than initially sold to the public.

Officials now say the war, which aims to help the Assad government recover as much territory as possible, will likely last "a year or more," and is already involving many more airstrikes than anyone really expected.

US officials are furious with Russia, while simultaneously mocking their "doomed" war and the suggestion ISIS could be defeated so quickly. The US, of course, is engaged in materially the exact same war against ISIS, and likewise presented the conflict as a relatively straightforward one when they launched it, over a year ago, only to find they've made no real progress in either Iraq or Syria.

In both the US and Russian cases, it seems unlikely that officials genuinely thought the ISIS war would be so short and easy, but rather figured public objection would be tamped down until the war was already well underway.