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Russian envoy: ISIS and Taliban competing for leadership in Afghanistan

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The Russian ambassador to Tajikistan Igor Lyakin-Frolov has said the affiliates of Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group are competing with the Taliban group for leadership among the extremist groups operating in Afghanistan.

Lyakin-Frolov quoted in local media reports said “The relations between the Taliban movement and ISIL in Afghanistan can currently be characterized as rivalry.”

Amid concerns regarding growing number of ISIS loyalists in Afghanistan, Lyakin-Frolov said “They have different views on the future structure of the country.”

He was apparently pointing towards the terror group’s intentions to expand their activities by considering the territory to be a part of a large quasi-state.

His remarks are followed by the Russian General Staff’s report earlier in October suggesting that the number of ISIS loyalists in Afghanistan ad reached 3,500 people.

This comes as a UN report released late in September stated that nearly 70 militants of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) terrorist group are busy in forming the core of the group’s branch in Afghanistan.

The report further added that the terror group is making inroads in Afghanistan with the number of sympathizers and followers growing across the country, with recruitment in process in at least 25 provinces of Afghanistan which include 10 percent of the sympathizers belonging to the Taliban group.

According to the report the ISIS loyalists and the Taliban militants are fighting each other only in eastern Nangarhar province, citing the drug trade as the main reason behind the brutal clashes.