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## Russia and USA to divide Syria in 'occupation zones'

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US Air Force Secretary Deborah Lee James announced the need for a ground operation in Syria in addition to aerial bombardments. According to James, one needs to occupy and administer its territory. Is a ground operation in Syria possible and how will Russia react to it? Pravda.Ru asked this question to leading expert at the Center for Military-Political Studies at MGIMO, Doctor of Political Sciences, Mikhail Alexandrov.

"I think the Americans should deploy their troops in northern Syria, where the Islamic State is located. The Syrian government army is moving very slow in its operation," said Mikhail Alexandrov.

The Mediterranean coast, the most populated areas of western and south-western Syria are now under the control of the Syrian armed forces. Other areas are controlled by Kurdish militia. "The Americans could control and monitor the areas on the border with Iraq, as the Islamic State is a cross-border power that is located both in Iraq and Syria.

"If we imagine that the Syrian army reaches the border with Iraq, it will be subjected to numerous attacks. The Islamic State will always be conducting combat actions there. This can go on indefinitely, and as soon as Russia stops its military operations, the terrorists will go back to where they were before September 30," the expert said in an interview with Pravda.Ru.

At the same time, he added, the troops must be deployed upon the approval from the UN Security Council. "The deployment of US troops in Syria should be agreed with Russia, with the Security Council to make it legitimate," said the analyst.

The suggestion to start a ground operation in Syria was just a test to see how the world would react, Mikhail Alexandrov said. "**If the Americans are willing to work through the UN Security Council, then it could be possible to regulate the crisis.** If they continue to stick to their line, doing everything unilaterally, then it will not do any good," the expert concluded.

Speaking about Russia's reaction to a possible ground operation of the US in Syria, Mikhail Alexandrov said that Russia could send troops to destroy the remnants of the Islamic State in the areas that should be controlled by Assad troops. "When the Americans come to Syria, there will be Russian troops there that will keep a certain line of defense, and the Americans not go to those territories. In fact, it will be the division of Syria."