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Russia Slams U.S. Air Strikes Against Islamic State in Syria

By Allison Quinn

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People inspect a shop damaged after what Islamist State militants say was a U.S. drone crashed into a communication station nearby in Raqqa, Syria.

Russia's Foreign Ministry lashed out over U.S.-led airstrikes targeting Islamic State militants in Syria in a scathing statement released Tuesday.

The U.S. and five Arab countries launched an aerial campaign against the Islamic State on Monday night, their most coordinated effort yet to rid conflict-stricken Syria of the radical militant organization that has set up a safe haven amid the turmoil of an ongoing civil war.

In its statement, the Foreign Ministry warned that the move violates international law and threatens to further destabilize the situation in Syria.

"Any such action can be carried out only in accordance with international law. That implies not a formal, one-sided 'notification' of airstrikes but the presence of explicit consent from

the government of Syria or a corresponding UN Security Council decision," the statement read.

Describing the U.S.-led move as a bid to “achieve one's own geopolitical goals,” the ministry said the airstrikes would only “exacerbate tensions and further destabilize the situation.”

“Moscow has repeatedly warned that the initiators of such unilateral military actions carry all international legal responsibility for the consequences,” the statement said.

The ministry's comments came after President Vladimir Putin criticized the airstrikes in a late-night conversation with UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon on Monday, saying the airstrikes should not have been launched without the consent of the Syrian government.

“The Russian side would like to stress that airstrikes against bases of the Islamic State in Syria should not be carried out without consent from the Syrian government,” a transcript on the Kremlin's website said.

On Tuesday, Damascus said Washington had informed government officials of its plans hours before the strikes, Reuters reported. That report said the Syrian government also expressed readiness to cooperate with the international effort to fight the Islamic State.

Washington said it had not coordinated its plans with Damascus, however, unlike earlier airstrikes conducted in Iraq in close coordination with the Iraqi military. The U.S. administration has demonstrated a reluctance to team up with the Syrian government in its fight against the Islamic State, maintaining that President Bashar Assad should step down because his forces used chemical weapons against rebels.

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