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Russian Airstrikes Hit CIA-Trained Rebels, Commander Says

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A frame grab taken from video released by the Russian Defence Ministry Oct. 1, shows Russian jets hitting a target in Syria, which the Kremlin says includes a list of well-known militant organizations and not only Islamic State.

Two Russian airstrikes in Syria on Thursday hit a training camp operated by rebel group that received military training from the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) in Qatar and Saudi Arabia, its commander said.

Hassan Haj Ali, head of the Liwa Suqour Jabal rebel group, told Reuters the camp in Idlib province was struck by around 20 missiles in two separate sorties.

Haj Ali, a Syrian army captain who defected after the uprising against President Bashar Assad, said some of the guards of the facility were slightly wounded in the attack.

"Russia is challenging everyone and saying there is no alternative to Bashar," Haj Ali said. He said the Russian jets had been identified by members of his group who once served as Syrian air force pilots.

His group counts itself as part of the "Free Syrian Army," which was set up by Syrian army defectors after the eruption of the uprising. The FSA today is a loose alliance of rebel groups without a centralized command and control structure.

The CIA has run an ostensibly covert training program for vetted Syrian rebel groups deemed moderate by Western states that have supported the uprising against Assad.

Haj Ali said his fighters had attended several trainings in Qatar and Saudi Arabia. It is at least the third "Free Syrian Army" group to report being targeted in air strikes which Russia says are targeting Islamic State.

U.S. Senator John McCain on Thursday said Russia's initial airstrikes in Syria targeted recruits in the Free Syrian Army rebel group backed by the United States.

FSA groups have been eclipsed in much of Syria by jihadists such as Islamic State and the al Qaeda-linked Nusra Front.

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