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Russian Strikes in Syria Destroy U.S.-trained Rebels' Weapons Depots

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A frame grab taken from footage from a camera under a plane, released by Russia's Defense Ministry shows a Russian military jet dropping bombs, as a miniature screen (L top) displays the territory moments before the airstrikes, near Idlib in Syria.

Russian air strikes have destroyed the main weapons depots of a U.S.-trained rebel group in Syria, their commander said on Wednesday, in an expansion of Russian attacks on insurgents backed by foreign enemies of President Bashar Assad.

The Liwa Suqour Jabal, whose fighters have attended military training organized by the Central Intelligence Agency in Saudi Arabia and Qatar, was also hit last week by Russian raids as Moscow began its air campaign in support of Damascus.

New strikes targeted the group's main weapons depots in western Aleppo province and completely destroyed them late on Tuesday, its commander Hassan Haj Ali told Reuters on Wednesday via an Internet messaging service.

Haj Ali said he believed the Russians were targeting his group because it was one of the bigger and stronger factions fighting under the banner of the Free Syrian Army with support from "Arab and foreign countries".

"These were considered the principal depots of the Liwa," he told Reuters.

Liwa Suqour Jabal operates areas of western and northern Syria where many of Russia's air strikes have been focused and where the Islamic State group - the stated target of the Russian air raids — has no significant presence.

It is one of a number of Syrian rebel groups deemed moderate by the United States which have received training as part of an ostensibly covert CIA program. That program is separate to one set up by the Pentagon to train and equip Syrian insurgents to fight Islamic State.

The group has been supplied with guided anti-tank missiles by states that oppose Assad. These missiles have had a significant impact on the battlefield.

Liwa Suqour Jabal has also been battling attempts by Islamic State to advance in areas north of Aleppo near the Turkish border. Haj Ali said Islamic State had also attacked the group on Tuesday, setting off a car bomb at one of its bases.

Liwa Suqour Jabal was targeted last week in Russian strikes.

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