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Russia Says Hezbollah, Hamas Aren't Terrorist Groups

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Palestinian Hamas militants

Russia does not consider Hezbollah a terrorist organization, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov told a press conference Sunday, the Interfax news agency reported.

"We maintain contacts and relations with [Hezbollah] because we do not consider them a terrorist organization. They have never committed any terrorist attacks on Russian territory," Bogdanov was cited as saying.

Bogdanov said Hezbollah and Hamas — the main Palestinian armed resistance group — had both been democratically elected and were "legitimate societal-political forces."

However, both groups have been blacklisted by the United States as terrorist organizations.

"The Americans consider Hamas a terrorist organization. But we don't agree, because they [represent] an integral part of Palestinian society," Bogdanov was cited as saying in the report.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said in Vienna after a meeting on Syria that Jordan is to coordinate international efforts to compile a common list of terrorist groups in Syria, Interfax reported Saturday.

Russia launched a military air offensive in Syria in late September in the name of combating international terrorism, but it has been accused by the West of targeting moderate opposition groups in a bid to shore up the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad — a longtime Moscow ally.

Hundreds of Hezbollah fighters have joined the ranks of Assad's regime.

Bogdanov said up to seven organizations would be included on the terrorist list, including the Islamic State, al-Nusra Front, and the Jaish al-Islam militant groups, the report said.

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