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Turkish Prime Minister Says Russia Committing 'Crimes' in Syria

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Turkish Prime Minister Ahmet Davutoglu has responded to claims by Russia's Defense Ministry that Turkey is preparing for a military invasion in Syria by announcing that Russia is committing 'crimes' in Syria, the Reuters news agency reported Friday.

Russian Defense Ministry spokesman Major General Igor Konashenkov announced on Thursday that there were "strong reasons to suspect Turkey is preparing for an invasion."

"Turkey has the right to take any measures to defend national security," Davutoglu said in response, Reuters reported. He also added that such declarations from Moscow fail "to detract attention from its criminal actions" in Syria.

The U.S. Department of State declined to comment on the accusations, stating only that Turkey remains an ally in the fight against Islamic State.

Clarifying the issue of Turkish military activity close to the Syrian border, U.S Secretary of State John Kerry said, "We know that Turkey has undertaken activity in the region of its border with Syria in order to guard a problematic area measuring 98 kilometers in length."

Russia has been carrying out air strikes in Syria since September, which it claims are directed at Islamic State, a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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