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Despite Withdrawal, Russia to Continue Bombing in Syria

By The Moscow Times

March 15, 2016



The Russian Air Force will continue to conduct strikes on terrorist targets operating in Syria, the Defense Ministry said on Tuesday, one day after President Vladimir Putin announced a partial withdrawal of his forces from the war-torn republic.

Moscow justified its intervention in Syria's civil war as a campaign against the Islamic State and other terrorist groups, but Western observers and officials have claimed that Russia's targets have primarily been elements of the so-called moderate Syrian opposition.

Deputy Defense Minister Nikolai Pankov said on Tuesday morning that although the Russian air group achieved serious results in Syria, "it is too early to speak of a victory over terrorism ... the air force is tasked with continuing attacks against terrorist targets."

The announcement follows Putin's unexpected announcement on Monday evening that Russia would withdraw the main component of its force deployed in Syria. Putin said the military's objectives had been mostly completed in Syria.

Videos published by the Defense Ministry on Tuesday morning showed the first wing of Sukhoi Su-34 fighter-bombers departing the Syrian government airbase in Latakia where Russian air forces had deployed in late September 2015.

Islamic State is a terrorist group banned in Russia.

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