

Russia to Help Remove Mines From Syria's Palmyra

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The old citadel of Palmyra is pictured in the background after forces loyal to Syria's President Bashar al-Assad recaptured the city.

President Vladimir Putin has told the chief of UNESCO that Russia will help remove mines from the Syrian city of Palmyra, the Kremlin spokesman was quoted as saying by the TASS news agency on Sunday, while also stressing the Russian role in helping Syrian government forces retake the ancient city.

The Kremlin said in two separate statements Sunday that Putin spoke by telephone with UNESCO head Irina Bokova and with Syrian President Bashar Assad — forces have retaken control of Palmyra from Islamic State fighters.

“Assad highly valued the help provided by the Russian Air Force, and also noted that such successes as the liberation of Palmyra would not have been possible without Russian help,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov was quoted by TASS as saying.

Russian servicemen will now work alongside their Syrian counterparts to “de-mine this ancient city,” Putin told Bokova, according to Peskov's statement.

The cultural and scientific organization UNESCO would also be involved, along with Russia and Syria, in evaluating the damage to Palmyra's legendary structures resulting from its occupation by IS, and attempting to restore “what is still possible to restore,” Peskov said.

In a separate phone conversation, Putin congratulated Assad on retaking Palmyra and stressed the “importance of preserving this unique historic city for global culture,” Peskov said, TASS reported.

Putin also reiterated his pledge that despite a recent announcement of a partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria, his military would “continue to help Syrian authorities in the fight against terrorism and in freeing their country from extremist groups,” Peskov was quoted as saying.

He provided no additional details on the scope of Russia's likely involvement.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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