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Russia Bombed Base Used By U.S. in Syria — Reports

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Russian aircraft bombed a rebel base in South-East Syria used by U.S. and U.K. special forces last month, the Wall Street Journal Newspaper reported Friday.

Moscow is allegedly using the strike to pressure the Obama administration into closer cooperation in Syria, the newspaper reported, citing unnamed government sources. It also claimed that Russian plane attacked a site used by families of CIA backed Syrian opposition fighters early this month.

The garrison in the village of At-Tanf near the Jordanian border was attacked June 16. A 20 strong British contingent moved off the site 24 hours prior to the Russian strike, the Wall Street Journal reported.

Following the attack, U.S. forces informed their Russian counterparts in Syria that the

garrison was part of the U.S. campaign against the Islamic State and should not be targeted. Roughly 90 minutes later, despite warning signals from U.S. aircraft, Russian planes attacked the site again, the newspaper claimed.

U.S. officials and rebel leaders claim that cluster munitions were used in the attacks and that four people were killed.

A U.S. official with access to classified intelligence described the incident as "very, very serious" and said that there had been the potential for U.S. and Russian jets to engage each other, the Radio Liberty news website reported.

Yury Melnik, a spokesperson for the Russian embassy in Washington, referred all questions on the incident to Russia's Defence Ministry. The Ministry had not yet responded to requests for a comment, the Wall Street Journal reported.

"In reality, the only objective Russia pursues in Syria is fighting terrorism and we believe that better coordination of Russian and American efforts would contribute to effective pursuit of this objective, as well as to a diplomatic solution of the Syrian crisis," said Melnik.

Russia began air strikes in Syria in September last year in a bid to ⊠fight terrorist groups working in the region. The West has repeatedly ⊠accused Moscow of also bombing moderate opposition groups and civilians,⊠ a claim which Russia strongly denies. Cooperation between Russian and ⊠U.S. forces in the country faces a number of hurdles, including ⊠disagreements on the fate of the Syrian leader Bashar Assad and the ⊠designation of different armed factions as "terrorist."⊠

U.S. Foreign Secretary John Kerry and his Russian counterpart Sergey Lavrov reached an agreement in Moscow last week to coordinate strikes against the Al-Nusra Front, an Al Qaeda affiliate.

The Islamic State and the Al-Nusra Front are terrorist organizations banned in Russia.

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