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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S., Russia to Coordinate Syria Airstrikes in Dedicated Geneva Center

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Russia and the United States are to coordinate their fight against the Islamic State through a dedicated center in the Swiss city of Geneva, the Interfax news agency reported Thursday.

Military experts from both countries will work together to decide which groups within Syria should be targeted with airstrikes, Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov told Interfax.

Disagreements over which armed groups should be designated as "terrorist" have proved to be a significant hurdle to Russian-U.S. cooperation in Syria. The United States has repeatedly categorized the Al-Nusra Front as "moderate opposition" to Syrian President Bashar Assad, while Moscow has labeled the group as "extremist."

A 48-hour ceasefire between Syrian government forces and opposition groups began at

sundown on Sept. 12 in order to deliver humanitarian aid. The Islamic State is not taking part in the truce.

Ceasefire violations have occurred on both sides, U.S. State Department deputy spokesperson Mark Toner said Wednesday. "What we've seen in the last 24 hours is a good, substantial reduction in violence and a period of calm," he said. "We want to see that move forward." He said that it was "Russia's responsibility" to pressure regime forces into abiding with the ceasefire.

The U.S. State Department also responded to requests by Moscow to release documents related to the ceasefire talks.

"We are always working with leaks from these documents," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova, told reporters on Thursday. "We want [the documents] released to avoid misinformation and the misinterpretation of potential leaks."

"We're continuing to assess whether we're going to release it or whether we might release aspects," Toner said.

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

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