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Russia Says It Has No Plans to Send Ground Troops to Syria

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Defense Ministry

Valentina Matviyenko, speaker of Russia's Federation Council, says that there are no plans for a Russian ground operation in Syria.

"Russia had no plans to participate in ground operations in Syria, we don't plan to send troops to Syria, we have made it clear from the beginning," Matviyenko said according to the TASS news agency.

In spite of the speaker's denial about ground troops, evidence shows that at least some troops beyond those needed to maintain Russia's port facilities at Tartus and their airfields further inland have been operating in Syria.

Last week it was discovered that a Chechen special forces battalion is deploying to Syria, and on Sunday the state-run news program *Weekly News* ran a segment which showed Russian special forces conducting combat operations in Syria.

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Concerns about the possibility of a Russian ground operation have been heightened after militants from the so-called Islamic State recaptured the city of Palmyra from Syrian government forces.

Commenting on the loss of the ancient city to ISIS militants, Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov called it "a loss for the entire civilized world, not only Russia."

Russia's Defense Ministry claims it destroyed 300 of the ISIS fighters in 64 airstrikes since Sunday, but on Monday the Interfax news agency reported that the ISIS push to the West from Palmyra continues.

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