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Pentagon Chief Slams Kremlin for 'Virtually Zero' Help in War Against IS

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U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter **Matt Dunham / AP**

U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter has accused Russia of giving U.S. troops "virtually zero" support in the fight against the Islamic State.

Speaking on NBC's "Meet the Press" Sunday evening, Carter said that Russia had not acted as an ally in Syria and that the Kremlin had made the situation in Syria more difficult.

"[Russia] came in. They said they were going to fight [the Islamic State (IS)], and they said they were going to help in the civil war in Syria," Carter said. "They haven't done either of those things. And as a consequence, of course, we're fighting IS ourselves."

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Carter also said that the Kremlin had "doubled down on the Syrian civil war," rather than pressure current Syrian leader Bashar Assad to leave power — a role that Putin was

“uniquely” suited for.

“Russian behavior in Syria, has certainly made the ending of the Syrian civil war harder,” he said.

The Democrat politician, who will be leaving office when President-elect Donald Trump is inaugurated later this month, also hit out at Russia over claims that the Kremlin had interfered in the U.S. presidential elections.

Carter said that a “painstaking” report released by U.S. intelligence agencies last week proved that Russia had committed an “aggressive act against our very democracy.”

The official called for “a response” to the alleged Russian-backed hack of U.S. server systems, but emphasized that any retaliation should not be military-based. U.S. President Barack Obama has already expelled 35 Russian diplomats and their families in relation to the report.

“I think the steps that have been taken so far probably represent a beginning and not the end— a floor, not the ceiling,” he said. “Obviously [it's] up to the next administration and the next Congress to take those steps.”

The Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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