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Russia and U.S. in Secret Talks Over Syrian 'Safe Zone' — Reports

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Aamaq News Agency via AP

Russia and the United States have been engaged in a series of confidential meetings to establish a 'safe zone' in Syria, the Al-Monitor news site has reported.

Russian and U.S. officials have met repeatedly in recent weeks, an anonymous source told the outlet. The talks reportedly included a meeting between officials in Jordan in late May.

"Last week, the Americans and Russias met in Jordan with the Jordanians to discuss these [safe] zones," the source said. "The meeting in Jordan was one part where the United States and Russia, Israel and Jordan can work together to have [a] de-escalation zone in the south of Syria."

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Six rounds of UN-backed negotiations in Geneva have so far failed to bring about a

political solution to the Syrian conflict. The war, now in its seventh year, has claimed 400,000 lives and created 5 million refugees.

Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed on the establishment of 'de-escalation zones' throughout Syria in rival talks hosted by Russian in the Kazakh capital Astana in May. The establishment of the zones is an effort to halt hostilities between armed opposition groups and the government of Bashar Al-Assad.

Russia's intervention in the Syrian war since September 2015 has been marred by allegations its airstrikes targeted civilian infrastructure, including mosques, schools, and air convoys.

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