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U.S. Orchestrated Drone Attack on Russian Base in Syria, Defense Ministry Says

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Marina Lystseva / TASS

Russia’s deputy defense minister has accused the U.S. of coordinating a drone attack on Moscow's Khmeimim airbase in Syria earlier this year.

Last January, Russian forces said they foiled a coordinated attack by 13 combat drones equipped with explosives on the Khmeimim airbase — an important outpost for Russia following the country's intervention in the Syrian war in 2015 on the side of Bashar Assad. At the time, Russia’s Defense Ministry said that radical Islamists had been behind the attack on the military installation.

Speaking at a security forum in Beijing on Thursday, Russia’s Deputy Defense Minister Alexander Fomin said that a U.S. reconnaissance aircraft had been behind the attack on the Russian airbase in January.

“At the time [of the attack], a U.S. Poseidon-8 reconnaissance aircraft had been patrolling the Mediterranean for eight hours,” he was cited as saying by the state-run TASS news agency.

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The drones were not controlled by some “sort of peasant, but a proper Poseidon-8 equipped with modern technology…it manually steered the drones,” Fomin added.

The official also said that the U.S. had supplied Syrian militants with equipment that allowed them to access radio frequencies operated by Russian aviation.

“Only a technologically advanced country has access to such tools; they cannot be made in the Syrian desert,” Fomin added.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called the news "alarming" in comments to reporters later on Thursday, adding that a political response "could not be ruled out," the RBC news website reported.

In July 2017, President Vladimir Putin signed an agreement with Syria to extend Russia’s lease on the Khmeimim airbase until 2066.

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