The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

U.S. 'Intercepted' Russian General in Syria – State Dept

January 24, 2020



Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015.
Baderkhan Ahmad / AP / TASS

U.S. forces intercepted an unidentified Russian major general in northern Syria during deconfliction operations, the U.S. State Department's special envoy for Syrian engagement and the anti-Islamic State coalition said Thursday.

James Jeffrey's remarks follow news of U.S. troops "blocking" a Russian military patrol from accessing an oilfield in northeastern Syria's province of Hasakah on Saturday. The envoy's revelations also come two years after U.S. airstrikes killed between five and 200 Russian mercenaries attempting to take over an oil refinery in eastern Syria's Deir Ezzor region.

Russia and the U.S. experienced "hiccups" in their military deconfliction efforts in Syria, including around 14 months ago when Russia moved toward the northern town of Manbij, Jeffrey said Thursday.

"At one point, we intercepted a Russian major general who was driving towards the town of

Manbij," the U.S. special envoy said in a televised briefing.

The interception "was all dealt with in these military-to-military channels," he told reporters.

Jeffrey did not identify the senior Russian major general.

Related article: U.S. Troops 'Block' Russian Soldiers in Syria

Jeffrey also described "mini-encounters" with Russian troops leading to "minor dustups" in another northeastern city of Qamishli.

He said they all get worked out at military channels, "...sometimes at the colonel level, sometimes at the one-star level, sometimes at the three-star level, but at the military level.".

Russia's Defense Ministry has not yet commented on Jeffrey's remarks.

Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015 as Moscow's Middle East ally grapples with a years-long civil war. The U.S.-led coalition deployed in the war-torn country in 2014.

As of mid-December, U.S. forces were deployed at 11 bases and military posts in northeast Syria, including five in Hasakah, four in Deir Ezzor and two in Raqqa, Turkey's Anadolu news agency reported last month. U.S. forces withdrew from Kurdish-held regions but stayed in oil-rich Deir Ezzor and Hasakah after Turkey waged its military campaign in northeast Syria, Anadolu reported in November.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/01/24/us-intercepted-russian-general-in-syria-state-dept-a69030