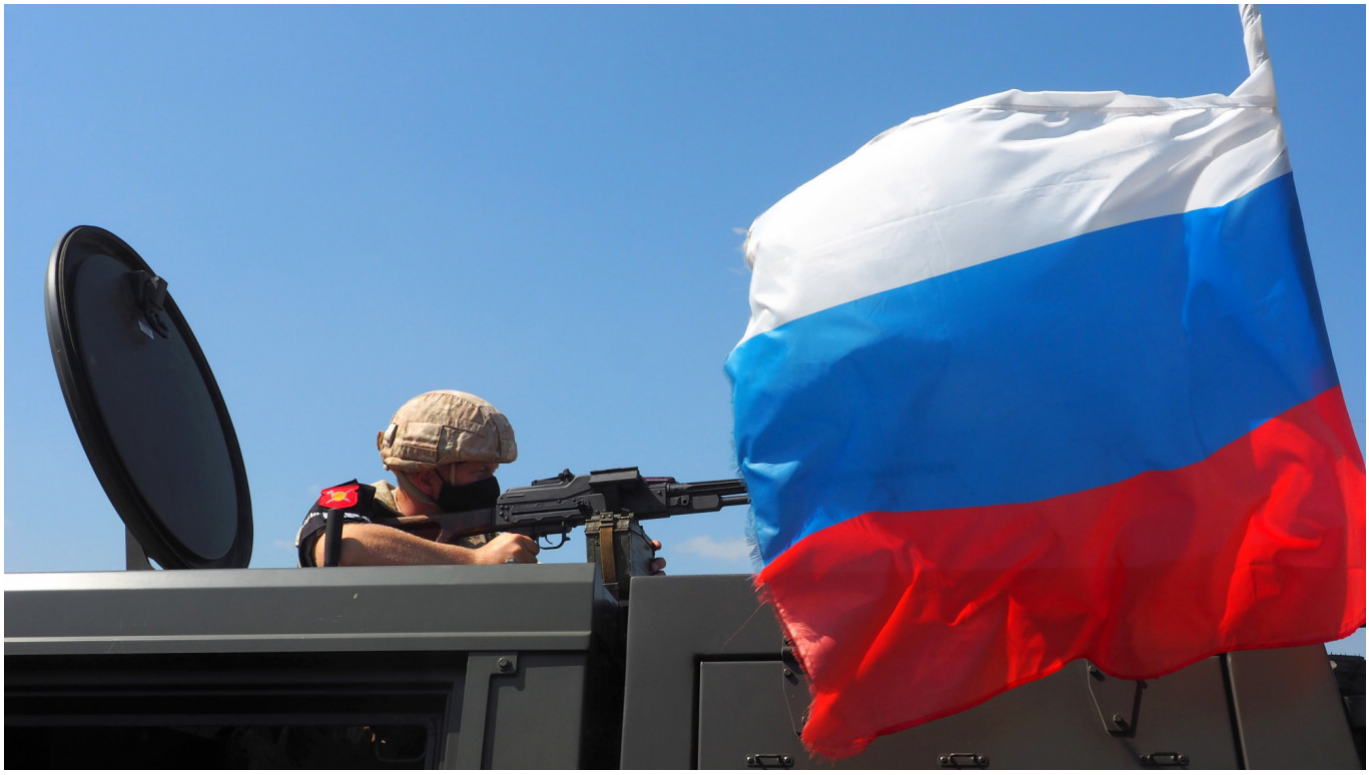
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Russian Serviceman Killed, 3 Injured in Syria Blast

By AFP

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A Russian military police officer photographed in the village of Ain al-Habr during a joint patrol of the M4 Motorway with Turkish troops in the Idlib de-escalation zone in northeast Syria. **Andrei Gryaznov / TASS**

An improvised explosive device killed one Russian soldier and wounded three more on patrol in northern Syria, Russian news agencies reported Wednesday, citing the Defense Ministry.

"On June 9, during a patrol by the Russian military police in the province of Hassakeh in the Syrian Arab Republic, an armored car was hit in the explosion of an unidentified device," said a ministry statement carried by news agencies.

"One Russian serviceman died as a result of the explosion," it added.

The three wounded soldiers had been hospitalized but were in a stable condition, said the statement.

Russia has been a key ally to the Syrian regime since the onset of a brutal, decade-long war.

Moscow's intervention in the conflict in 2015 was seen as having turned the tide of the fighting in President Bashar al-Assad's favor.

Moscow has minimized its footprint in the fighting by using private military contractors with alleged links to the Kremlin.

Russia has never acknowledged the reports of mercenaries, but did say earlier this year that since its operation in Syria launched, 112 Russian troops had died in combat operations.

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