
Syria slams US-led coalition deadly strike against troops as 'act of aggression'

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Downing of Russia's Su-24 reveals Turkey's real agenda in war on ISIS –
Assad <http://on.rt.com/6y5u>



On top of the fatalities, 13 personnel were injured and a number of military vehicles were destroyed when warplanes fired nine missiles at the Saeqa military camp.

The incident is the first of its kind since the coalition started to bomb Syrian territory more than a year ago, though the US-led alliance continues to deny it carried out the airstrike.

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"Syria strongly condemns the act of aggression by the US-led coalition that contradicts the UN Charter on goals and principles. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has sent letters to the UN Secretary General and the UN Security Council," Syria's SANA news agency quoted the country's foreign ministry as saying.

Coalition spokesman Colonel Steve Warren has insisted, however, that the only airstrikes in the area were delivered some 55km away.

"We've seen those Syrian reports but we did not conduct any strikes in that part of Deir ez Zor yesterday. So we see no evidence," he said.

The Deir ez Zor province is situated in eastern Syria, and is largely controlled by Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL). The region is of significant strategic importance to the terrorist group, as it contains a number of oilfields, which are a major source of revenue for IS.

On November 24 a Turkish Air Force F-16 jet shot down a Russian Su-24 bomber over Syria. Ankara claims the Russian plane briefly crossed into Turkish airspace. One of the Russian pilots was killed by Syrian rebels as he ejected from the stricken plane, while the other was rescued in a swift operation during which one Russian serviceman was killed.

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The downing of the bomber by Turkey came after a successful Russian bombing campaign against ISIS oil infrastructure on the Syria-Turkish border, and was seen as revenge. Putin described the act as *"a stab in the back"* and accused Erdogan of benefiting from the illegal oil trade with IS and financing the terrorists.

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Russia has been conducting airstrikes targeting IS and other terrorist groups in Syria since September 30. The strikes were launched after a formal request from Damascus. Russian jets have been carrying out sorties from Moscow's Khmeimim Air Base in Latakia.

The US-led coalition's airstrikes in Syria are in fact illegal, as it has never received permission from Syrian President Bashar Assad to enter the country's airspace. In response to the UK's decision to join the bombing campaign in Syria, Assad reiterated in an interview with the Sunday Times that the presence of Britain in Syria is unlawful as neither Damascus nor the United Nations have given London the green light to bomb Syrian territory.

"It will be harmful and illegal and it will support terrorism, as happened after the coalition started its operation a year or so [ago], because this is like a cancer," Assad said.
