
French defense chief to ask Russia to step up anti-ISIS ops

21/12/2015



Ahead of his visit to Moscow on Monday, the French defense minister told journalists Paris would ask Russia to increase its action against Islamic State, and would offer intelligence sharing and plans for a joint vision on combating terrorist groups in Syria.

French Defense Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian heads for Moscow this Monday in pursuit of enhanced collaboration between France and Russia to combat Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) on Syrian soil. His main goal is to ask Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu to increase strikes against IS, according to AFP.

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"We will discuss what we consider to be terrorist groups, and how Russia might increase its action against Daesh [an Arabic acronym for IS], which is our sole enemy," Le Drian was quoted as saying by AFP.

Despite other Western countries being slow to join efforts with Russia in suppressing IS militants, Paris is showing signs of a far more pragmatic approach towards combating international terrorism.

Le Drian also told journalists he would offer the Russian military an intelligence-sharing framework to exchange information on Russian as well as French speakers in IS, which could be useful for both sides.

The minister stressed France is ready to act responsibly, as *"intelligence sharing requires giving on both sides."*

French and Russian defense chiefs will also discuss measures to prevent dangerous incidents in Syrian airspace between the two countries' warplanes during combat sorties.

The French defense minister's trip comes after President Francois Hollande visited Moscow in November in the wake of the Paris terror attacks that killed 130 people. Hollande's talks with Russian President Vladimir Putin resulted in a joint declaration to intensify strikes against IS and coordinate the military effort in and around Syria.

Following the political statement by the French president, Le Drian is now coming to Moscow with a roadmap outlining exact strategies for tackling the threat posed by IS.

Meeting with President of France Francois Hollande <http://bit.ly/1OtLDfQ>



France has recently deployed its aircraft carrier, the Charles de Gaulle, off Syria's coast, complete with 26 bomber jets on board. Russian guided missile destroyer the Moskva is ready to provide temporary cover, with President Putin ordering the Russian military to work “as *allies*” with the French.

On Sunday, President Putin called on European states to act independently and join forces with Russia in combating international terrorism, saying in a documentary on the emerging world order that Europeans’ best interests “*lie in joining efforts with Russia.*” Moscow is ready to cooperate even in the midst of sanctions, Putin stressed.

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The French military is carrying out anti-IS strikes as part of the US-led coalition that has not proved effective so far. The coalition’s legitimacy is highly questionable, as Damascus has at no time invited the West to conduct an air campaign on Syrian territory.