

# *Pentagon Chief Says U.S. Prepared to Increase Special Forces in Syria*

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Washington, December 2 (RHC)-- U.S. Defense Secretary Ashton Carter says the United States is "prepared to expand" the role of Special Operations Forces in Syria. Carter spoke before the House of Representatives Armed Services Committee on Tuesday.

The United States has already deployed dozens of ground troops to Syria claiming they will assist Kurdish forces in their battle against Daesh (ISIL) terrorists.

On October 30th, senior Obama administration officials said that Washington would send some 50 special forces to Syria to "train, advise and assist" militants fighting against the Daesh, in an apparent breach of Obama's promise not to put U.S. "boots on the ground" there.

A top official in Washington told reporters that this move does not indicate a change in U.S. strategy, but an "intensification" of the military campaign. The presence of U.S. troops on the ground in Syria lacks any mandate from the Syrian government and Damascus says it is a violation of its sovereignty.

The U.S. is escalating its involvement in Syria amid Russia's intensifying campaign in the country to assist President Bashar al-Assad in fighting against ISIL terrorists. The U.S. forces will remain in Syria for what is described as "the foreseeable future."

On September 30th, Russia began its military campaign against Daesh terrorists and militants fighting against the Syrian government. Moscow has carried out scores of airstrikes, killing hundreds of terrorists.

U.S. officials claim that Russia has directed parts of its military campaign against U.S.-backed militants and other extremist groups in an effort to weaken them. They say the CIA-trained militants are under Russian strikes with little prospect of rescue by their American supporters.

Carter also told the House Armed Services Committee on Tuesday that the Pentagon is deploying "specialized" troops in Iraq to help fight Daesh terrorists. "In full coordination with the Government of Iraq, we're deploying a specialized expeditionary targeting force to assist Iraqi and Kurdish Peshmerga forces and to put even more pressure on ISIL," Carter said, using an alternative acronym for the terrorist group.

About 3,500 U.S. troops are currently "advising and assisting" Iraqi forces in the fight against Daesh. The United States and its allies have been conducting airstrikes in Iraq and Syria since last year.

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