

Russia Says U.S. Military Presence in Syria Resembles Occupation



Moscow, November 24 (RHC)-- Russia says the U.S. military presence in Syria looks like an occupation as it runs afoul of international law and lacks authorization from the Damascus government. "From the standpoint of international law, the United States of America stay illegally in Syria. They have no appropriate official permission or invitation from Damascus," Russian Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said on Thursday.

"They are there against the will of the legitimate government of Syria, without legal basis, so in fact their behavior closely resembles that of an occupation," she added.

Last week, U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis said the U.S. would not walk away from Syria until UN-brokered peace talks in the Swiss city of Geneva made progress. "The enemy hasn't declared that they're done with the area yet, so we'll keep fighting as long as they want to fight," he said, claiming that Washington was conducting military operations in Syria under a UN mandate. Syria reacted angrily to Mattis' remarks, condemning the U.S. military presence in the country as "an act of aggression."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov also denounced the American intervention as illegal. "It is quite

interesting how the U.S. justifies its presence there, which is illegitimate because it does not rely either on the decision of the UN Security Council or at the invitation of the legitimate government,” he said.

U.S. Defense Secretary James Mattis was asked on Monday about the legal standing of his country’s presence in Syria compared to that of Russia and Iran. Russia has been conducting air raids against Daesh and other terrorist groups inside Syria at the Damascus government’s request since September 2015.

On the contrary, the U.S. and its allies back militants fighting to topple the Syrian government. American warplanes have been bombing Syria since September 2014 without any authorization from Damascus or a UN mandate, which has seriously damaged the country's infrastructure. The airstrikes have on many occasions resulted in civilian casualties and failed to fulfill their declared aim of countering terrorism.

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