

# *Russian President Vladimir Putin Says Airstrikes Aim to Preserve Syria's Territorial Integrity*

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Paris, October 3 (RHC)-- Russian President Vladimir Putin says one of the key objectives of Moscow's anti-terror airstrikes in Syria is to preserve the Arab country's territorial integrity.

Russia's air support "for offensive operations of the Syrian army also pursues a main goal of maintaining territorial integrity of this country," Putin's spokesman Dmitry Peskov quoted him as saying during a Friday meeting with French President Francois Hollande in Paris, the Interfax news agency reported.

Putin told Hollande that Russian bombers are carrying out their operation "in strict compliance with international law" and "at the request of the Syrian leadership," Peskov stated.

Hollande, for his part, told Putin that the airstrikes must be limited to attacking the Daesh terrorist group, not other terrorists operating in Syria, which the West labels as "moderate rebels."

Putin later discussed the crisis in Syria in a separate Friday meeting with German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The leaders "said very clearly that Daesh was the enemy that we needed to fight," Merkel told reporters after the talks.

Syria has been gripped by deadly violence since March 2011. Syrian forces have since been battling terrorists on different fronts throughout the country.

Moscow began its military campaign against terrorists on September 30 upon a request from the Damascus government, shortly after the upper house of the Russian parliament gave Putin the mandate to use military force in Syria.

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