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Russia Says ‘Volunteers’ Likely to Fight in Syria

By Jason Ditz
October 5, 2015

Russian military official Admiral Vladimir Komoyedov reiterated today that there are no plans for Russian ground troops to get directly involved in the Syrian Civil War, but said it was very likely that Russian “volunteers” will start showing up in the ranks of the Syrian Army.

Komoyedov predicted that a “unit of Russian volunteers, conflict veterans, will probably appear in the ranks of the Syrian Army” soon, saying that such fighters would be drawn to the conflict by the money to be made in such a fight.

Though mercenary fighting is technically illegal in Russia, the law on that is seldom enforced, and the admiral conceded that the emergence of such volunteer forces in Syria “cannot be stopped.” Veterans of the Russian military were a common sight during the Ukraine Civil War as well.

Though such “volunteer” groups inevitably raise speculation that they are operating under Russian government control, the reality may be much more subtle, that Russia is simply more willing to overlook mercenary work when it is carried out for factions with whom the Russian Federation is allied.

Such fighters could be welcomed by the Syrian government, which is struggling to keep its military numbers up after years of war, and while Syria has had no shortage of Shi’ite volunteer

militias from Iraq and Iran, they have tended to be untrained and have struggled to fight combat-hardened rebel forces.