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Moscow's Growing Influence in Middle East: Jordan Set up War Room with Russia

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Jordan has set up a [joint war room](#) with Russia to carry out coordinated anti-Islamic State military operations in Syria. The Kingdom already hosts a joint war room north of Amman, called the US Central Command Forward-Jordan, as part of a lineup with the US, Saudi Arabia and Israel. Now it has a coordination cell with Russia-Syria-Iran-Iraq (RSII) anti-terrorist coalition. This is an evident policy shift.

According to *Debkafle*, an Israeli military intelligence website based in Jerusalem, major military and intelligence efforts will be directed to the new center. The *Debkafle*'s [exclusive report](#) emphasizes that «the establishment of the new command center will likely enable the legitimate Syrian army to defeat the rebels in the country».

Jordan **will stop** providing so-called «moderate» Syrian rebels with their main pipeline, experts noted, adding that opposition groups will also be deprived of funding and other types of assistance from the US, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.

The Russia-supported Syrian government forces have made significant gains since the Russian military operation was launched. For instance, on January 12, Syrian army and allied forces took full control from rebel groups of the strategic town of Salma, in the northwestern province of Latakia. The government troops also advanced in the Hama and Homs provinces. Currently, the Syrian military is on the offensive in the southern Daraa province. It all makes the coordination of anti-terrorist efforts with Russia an issue of paramount importance.

Last October, Russia and Jordan **agreed** to coordinate the activities of their armed forces in Syria through a specialized working mechanism in Jordan's capital Amman.

«Following an agreement reached between his Majesty King Abdullah II [of Jordan] and President of Russia Vladimir Putin, the military of the two countries have agreed to coordinate their activities, including the air forces' activities over Syrian territory», Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov **told** reporters.

Other states, which are also fighting against terrorism, can join this mechanism as well, Lavrov added.

The war room set up in Jordan is an element of the trend. It goes to show that Russia is emerging as an essential diplomatic and security partner for the US and other leading actors in Syria. It is not aimed at strengthening one coalition in favor of another. Quite to the contrary, it serves the purpose of uniting the efforts – just exactly what is needed to effectively oppose the terrorist threat. Willy-nilly, even those who are skeptical towards Russia have to admit the obvious fact.

«While we remain skeptical of Russian interests and intentions in Syria, we also believe that they will be an essential part of any political solution to this conflict», one senior administration official **explained** on January 12. «The degree of communication we have with them reflects that view».

Speaking at the Center for Strategic and International Studies last November, CIA Director John Brennan **said**: *«We've been exchanging information. I think it needs to be enhanced. But I am determined to continue to work with my Russian counterparts because of the importance that I think we each can bring to this issue in terms of our insights, our information, our data, and sharing it».*

The US and Russia have agreed on a memorandum of understanding that mandates the use of specific communication frequencies and the establishment of a communication line on the ground in Syria. Russian and US pilots operate at safe distances.

Syria will top the agenda during the Lavrov-Kerry meeting slated for January 20. The foreign chiefs will discuss the plans for a January 25 UN-sponsored meeting in Geneva to organize a common opposition front in Syria and keep Iran and Saudi Arabia on board. The coordination of

military efforts in Syria is part of a larger process to meet the stated goals.

Jordan's King Abdullah II is an important partner keen on boosting the Russian-American cooperation in an attempt to finally achieve a cease-fire in the south between rebels and government forces and launch a coordinated assault on the Islamic State.

Russia and Israel set a good example of avoiding conflicts and incidents: both countries do not interfere with each other's activities.

Russia and France have been coordinating their anti-terrorist efforts according to the agreements reached on November 26, 2015 during the visit of the French President to Moscow after the Paris terrorist attacks (November 13-14). Sergey Rogov, head of prestigious US and Canada Institute of the Russian Academy of Sciences, [said](#) in his comments on the results of the visit that *«For the first time after World War Two, Russia and one of the leading Western powers have agreed on joint efforts against a common enemy like Hitler. But even the anti-Hitler coalition did not form at once»*.

Recent events indicate a turn in the Jordan's policy on Syria, as they will drastically change the decision making process and intelligence sharing. Unlike before, today anti-terrorist effort of the Russia-led coalition is coordinated with the US, France, Jordan and many other actors. It will add to the capabilities of the Russian, Syrian and Iranian military coordination center set up in Baghdad. Coordinating its activities with the US-led coalition, Iraq uses this coordinating cell for its anti-Islamic State effort. It actually brings the two coalitions together. The war room [provided](#) intelligence during the Iraqi forces operation to free Ramadi from the Islamic State forces.

True, Russian President Vladimir Putin's idea of a broader coalition against Islamic State terrorists proposed at the UN General Assembly in September, 2015, has not been implemented so far. Nevertheless, all the above mentioned facts are an important step forward.

Russian military effort in Syria is gaining ground. It is bringing in new actors. It has become an operation of a much broader scope than it was back in September 2015, when the first Russian aircraft flew its first sortie. The attitude of many participants in the anti-terrorist campaign towards Russia's military operation in Syria has changed. Russian Middle East influence clout has grown exponentially on the eve of the international talks on Syria scheduled to take place in Geneva on January 25.