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## Russian FM: US Asks Russia Not to Attack al-Qaeda in Syria

By Jason Ditz  
June 3, 2016

Russian officials had previously said their halt on airstrikes against al-Qaeda's Syria affiliate, the Nusra Front, was a result of requests from rebels. Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov today revealed that the US had actually been the ones to request the halt.

"They are telling us not to hit Nusra, because there is 'normal opposition next to it,'" Lavrov insisted saying Russia wants the rest of the opposition to leave the positions alongside Nusra. Russia has been trying to convince the US to agree to a joint operation against Nusra, but unsuccessfully.

The State Department did not appear to contest Lavrov's account, saying they don't have a problem in theory with airstrikes against Nusra, but that "a more complete effort needs to be made in order to distinguish between al-Nusra and the parties to the cessation."

This has been an ongoing problem throughout the ceasefire. Nusra, which is not a party to the truce, used it to expand its territory, and some of its rebel allies, who are in the ceasefire, have gone along for the ride, only to express outrage every time Syria launches counterattacks.