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<http://news.antiwar.com/2017/11/03/senior-us-official-visits-damascus-meets-security-chief/>

Senior US Official Visits Damascus, Meets Security Chief

11/3/2017

An unnamed “senior US official” reportedly made a surprise visit to the Syrian capital city of Damascus earlier this week, meeting with Ali Mamlouk, the Syrian National Security Chief.

Those familiar with the situation say the US official pressed American concerns in the Syrian War, in particular a number of Americans who are “missing” inside Syria, including CIA operatives who were on the ground.

This is the first official high level American visit to Syria since the war began in 2011. The US has since backed the rebels and demanded regime change, while refusing any contacts with the Assad government.

Mamlouk was said to have complained to the official about the unauthorized presence of US ground troops in Syria, though the official insisted the troops are just “advisory” and are fighting ISIS.

US officials have continued to insist they will only accept regime change in Syria, but with many of the rebel forces defeated outright, the talks suggest that the US is starting to come to terms with the reality that the Assad government isn’t going to be militarily removed.