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The Telegraph

Syria: Nato 'planning direct military intervention', Russia claims

Nato is planning "direct military intervention" in Syria, a top Russian official has claimed, suggesting the alliance may set up a no-fly zone and dispatch Turkish troops to the troubled country.

By Andrew Osborn

1/12/2012

The head of Russia's security council said he had seen intelligence indicating plans for a military incursion were well advanced.

"We are getting information that Nato members and some Persian Gulf States, operating according to the Libya scenario, intend to move from indirect intervention in **Syrian** affairs to direct military intervention," Nikolai Patrushev, the head of the Kremlin security body said in an interview published in Russia's Kommersant newspaper on Thursday.

"This time it is true that the main strikes forces will not be provided by France, the UK or Italy, but possibly by neighbouring Turkey which was until recently on good terms with Syria and is a rival of Iran with immense ambitions." America and Turkey were even now possibly already refining options for a no-fly zone that would allow armed Syrian opposition fighters to mass in the designated areas, he added.

Mr Patrushev, a Kremlin hawk who used to run the FSB security service, the Russian successor agency to the KGB, went on to claim that the real reason Syria was coming under so much international pressure to end a brutal crackdown on the opposition was largely geopolitical.

"Syria has not become an object of interest for a new coalition of the willing in itself," he said. "The plan is to punish Damascus not so much for repressing the opposition as for its unwillingness to sever its friendly relations with Tehran."