Russia is Dead Serious About Fighting ISIS, So Why Washington Isn't?

On August 16 Russia’s Tu-22M3 and Su-34 bombers took off from the Hamadan airbase in Iran to launch successful strikes against ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra in the Syrian governorates of Aleppo and Deir ez-Zor.

These actions of Russia’s military command serve as a clear demonstration of the strengthening strategic cooperation between Russia and Iran in the fight against international terrorists, yet they provoked a range of different reactions in the international media.

Citing the secretary of the Supreme National Security Council of Iran Ali Shamkhani, the Iranian news agency IRNA underlined the fact that the Iranian-Russian strategic cooperation in the fight against international terrorism means that the parties are sharing their military potential and facilities to achieve the best possible results.

It’s absolutely clear that those media sources that understand the threat that groups like ISIS present to the international community have all been vocally supporting Russia’s approach to the struggle against the "black plague" of this century.

Thus, the Swiss newspaper Neue Zuercher Zeitung underlines the fact that Russia optimizes its combat operations in the Middle East, explaining to its readers the clear advantages of Iranian military bases for operations Moscow has been carrying out against ISIS. Swiss journalists comprehend the fact that Russia’s long-range Tu-22M3 bombers are unable to take off from the relatively short runway of the Khmeimim air base in Latakia, therefore those planes were previously forced to fly from Russian territory. Now that Tu-22M3s are able to take advantage of the Iranian Hamadan air base, they will reduce their time in flight by half. At the same time, better efficiency means that Russia will be saving up to 2.5-4 million dollars a day spent on military expenses.

Moreover, while citing the chairman of the Russian State Duma Defense Committee, Konstantin Kosachev, the Neue Zuercher Zeitung notes that the new routes that strategic bombers will take will be safer and those planes will be able to take bigger bomb loads, which will increase the effectiveness of Russia’s military operations against ISIS.

A similar assessment has been provided by the Austrian newspaper Die Presse which added that the world has somewhat ignored the symbolic significance of this step, since Moscow and Tehran have highlighted that they have started cooperating more closely in Syria. Austrian journalists note that Moscow has made it clear that it will have a strong military presence in the region, which gives Washington a major headache.

In a bid to show its loyalty to Washington and in the wake of yet another round of anti-Russian hysteria, Time would note that it looks like the US and its allies have a new “axis of evil” in the Middle East:. Syria, Iran and Russia. The magazine would stress that by launching the attacks from the Hamadan air base, Russia has crossed two geopolitical thresholds: it marked the first time the Iranians permitted a foreign power to use one of its bases to launch
an attack since the 1979 Iranian revolution and it’s been the first time Russia has used a third nation (other than Syria and Russia itself) to attack targets inside Syria.

The overall tone of the British coverage of the topic shows that London has no political position of its own, therefore state-owned British media sources continue condemning Russia, following the example that their American colleagues set.

The official position of Washington on the matter has been vaguely expressed by the US State Department’s spokesman, Mark Toner, who noted that Russia may have violated UN Security Council Resolution 2231, which prohibits the delivery, sale or transfer of combat aircraft to Iran without the approval of the UN Security Council. Yet, we must not forget that the resolution was not about sanctions for the sake of sanctions, it stated that there must be a comprehensive plan regarding the nuclear program of Iran, which has been successfully developed and implemented by the US and Russia. Therefore, this resolution has no relation to the strikes of Russian long-range bombers, using airbases in Iran to attack ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria, which are widely recognized by the international community as terrorist groups.

This kind reaction reminds the world of how the West views Syria, Iran, and the entire Middle East as its exclusive domain, a domain in which other international players are excluded, even if their intentions are to end the threat of international terrorism.

It must be recognized that Russian bombers using the Hamadan military base have other serious geopolitical implications. It means that Tehran has openly joined the fight against ISIS and changes the whole operational and strategic situation in the Middle East. Ankara has also been changing its position on this matter after Erdogan’s visit to St. Petersburg. Turkey has finally begun controlling the Turkish-Syrian border, denying radical militants new supplies of weapons and ammunition.

It’s a pity that only the Obama administration along with certain Washington’s allies have not changed attitudes towards ISIS, assisting those radical militants instead of taking any steps to put an end to the threat of international terrorism.

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