Tehran Mocks Anti-Jihadist Front Without Syria

15/09/2014

Neither Iran nor Syria were invited to the meeting in the French capital, despite the Damascus government's involvement in almost daily military action against IS.

"The best way of fighting IS and terrorism in the region is to help and strengthen the Iraqi and Syrian governments, which have been engaged in a serious struggle against terrorism," deputy foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian told a visiting French lawmaker.

"The Islamic Republic of Iran has not been waiting for the formation of an international coalition -- it has been carrying out its obligations," he told foreign affairs committee chairwoman Patricia Adam, the ISNA news agency reported.

Washington has been strongly opposed to Shiite Iran's involvement in the coalition it has been building to fight the jihadists in Iraq and neighbouring Syria for fear of alienating Sunni governments, particularly regional heavyweights Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

US Secretary of State John Kerry said on Friday that Washington opposed Tehran's participation because of its "engagement in Syria and elsewhere".

The deputy foreign minister is the latest in a string of Iranian officials to criticise US efforts to wage war against the jihadists, who have seized a big chunk of eastern Syria and northern and north-central Iraq.

Iranian officials charge that it was Gulf Arab and US support for the rebels fighting to overthrow

the Syrian regime since 2011 that paved the way for the rise of IS.

They say that only a change of policy toward the Damascus regime by Washington and its Gulf Arab allies can turn the tables.

US President Barack Obama announced last Wednesday that he had authorised the expansion to Syria of the US air campaign against IS he launched in early August.

There have been no US strikes so far but Obama's announcement, which was made in defiance of the Syrian government, drew protests from Damascus and its Iranian and Russian allies.

Washington has long backed the rebels fighting to overthrow President Bashar al-Assad.