
Russia says US failing to deliver on Syria deal, wants details declassified

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Russia says the US is not keeping its end of the bargain on the Syrian ceasefire, and is continuing its calls for Washington to make all documents relating to the deal public. The Russian military says Damascus is the only party observing the agreement.

“On the third day of the ceasefire only the Syrian Army is observing it. Meanwhile, the US-led ‘moderate rebels’ are intensifying the shelling of residential areas,” the Russian Defense Ministry said in a statement on Thursday.

The military added that the US failed to deliver on its promise to separate truce-observing moderates and truce-violating terrorists and is now *“apparently trying to use a smoke-screen to cover up the violations of their part of the deal.”*

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Earlier the US said that both Damascus and the rebels were reported as violating the ceasefire, which was announced earlier this week. Washington acknowledges its responsibility to stop violations committed by the anti-government forces.

“We’ve always been clear, just as we have said that Russia’s responsibility is to exert influence or put pressure – however you want to put it – on the regime to abide by the cessation of hostilities, it is incumbent on us to persuade, convince the moderate opposition to also abide by the cessation of hostilities, and ultimately, that’s a decision they’re going to have to make,” US State Department spokesman Mark Toner said Wednesday.

“We’re continuing our outreach to the Syrian moderate opposition – that’s been ongoing – and trying to explain the arrangement to them, answer their questions. And again, we’ve seen, as I said, sporadic reports of violence, but in large part we think [the ceasefire] is holding,” he added.

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Amid the mounting differences of opinion over the truce between US and Russia, Moscow reiterated its call to declassify the entire deal negotiated in Geneva last week. The US insisted that the documents were classified, which Russia initially agreed to, saying it would help protect it from potential derailment.

But after several officials in the US voiced doubt about Russia's sincerity in keeping to the deal, Moscow said it would seek to make the agreement public so that people could see for themselves what the deal was about. Declassifying all relevant documents and endorsing them in a UN Security Council resolution would prevent

speculation about the responsibilities of the parties involved, Russia believes.

"We know well how often documents get leaked to the media, and not by Russia but by our American colleagues," Russian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Maria Zakharova said on Thursday. *"Moscow suggests publishing [the documents] to avoid any erroneous interpretations, prevent an impact of such leaks on any party involved in the conflict or manipulation attempts by parties not familiar with details of the deal."*

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Russia is not the only nation to take this stance. France said on Thursday it wants to see the exact wording of the deal.

"If there is confusion... then there is also a risk of the moderate opposition being hit," French Foreign Minister Jean-Marc Ayrault said, as cited by Reuters. *"At one point we're going to be asked to support in greater detail this plan, so to do that we will need to have all the information."*

The US and Russia signed a deal to curb the violence in Syria last week, with both sides hailing it as a major breakthrough. The ceasefire is meant to last for seven days. The UN said the truce managed to significantly reduce violence in Syria, but skepticism remains, as a similar attempt in February eventually collapsed.

Terrorist groups Al-Nusra Front and Islamic State (IS, formerly ISIS/ISIL) are not part of the deal and are legitimate targets for Russian and Syrian troops. Some reports have claimed that Damascus has attacked 'moderate rebels' while supposedly going after Al-Nusra. Moscow says the US has failed to clearly distinguish Al-Nusra Front-allied groups from those which are meant to be protected by the ceasefire, despite Russia's numerous requests to provide such intelligence.

A lack of progress in making the ceasefire comprehensive is hampering humanitarian relief, which is one of the key parts of the US-Russian deal for Syria. On Thursday, UN Special Envoy to Syria Staffan de Mistura said Damascus would not give permission for aid convoys to travel to areas in need.

Moscow earlier stated that a humanitarian corridor to Aleppo could be opened once the rebels confirm their readiness to pull troops back from roads leading to the city. The Syrian Army is on standby to take a similar step.