

# Defense Secretary Mattis Rules Out US-Russia Military Cooperation in Syria

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*Trump said he wants to cooperate with Russia in combating terrorism in Syria. Defense Secretary Mattis rejects the idea.*

In Brussels at NATO headquarters, he claimed “(w)e are not in a position right now to collaborate on a military level, but our political leaders will engage and try to find common ground or a way forward so that Russia, living up to its commitment, can return to a partnership of sorts here with NATO.”

Russia’s aggressive actions have violated international law and are destabilizing. (It has) to prove itself first. The point about Russia is they have to live by international law just like we expect all nations on this planet to do.

Separately, Rex Tillerson said “we expect Russia to honor its commitments to the Minsk agreements and work to de-escalate violence in Ukraine. Where we do not see eye-to-eye, the United States will stand up for the interests and values of America and her allies.”

These type comments aren’t encouraging, sounding like Carter Ashton and John Kerry never left.

Wars raging in multiple theaters are Washington’s doing, not Russia’s, going all-out to resolve them in Syria and Ukraine diplomatically.

Actions by America, NATO, Israel and other regional rogue states flagrantly violate international law. Russia is the world’s preeminent peacemaker.

Hostile comments by Mattis and Tillerson run counter to Trump’s rhetoric. Is he saying one thing while pursuing another?

Is Washington’s imperial agenda safe in his hands? Will endless US wars continue unabated? Will new ones be launched?

Will adversarial relations toward Russia, China and all other sovereign independent nations remain official US policy?

Will the horrors of the last 24 years continue at home and abroad? Is Trump the latest in a long line of US warrior presidents?

Is catastrophic nuclear war on his watch possible? Humanity holds its breath.

## A Final Comment

Russia hope two rounds of Syria peace talks in Astana, Kazakhstan boost chances for significant progress toward conflict resolution when all parties involved meet in Geneva on February 23.

Deputy Russian Foreign Minister Gennady Gatilov called Astana a “platform” for continuing dialogue next week.

Three previous Geneva rounds failed because Washington undermined them. It remains to be seen if Trump wants war or peace.

It’s unclear where Turkey stands. It illegally occupies part of northern Syria. On Thursday, Syria’s chief peace talks negotiator Bashar al-Jaafari accused Ankara and opposition representatives of “disrupt(ing) the Astana meetings.”

They prevented adoption of a final communique, he said, showing an “irresponsible attitude” toward the proceedings.

Turkey sent a low-level delegation to Astana, arriving late, calling into question its commitment to conflict resolution.

Jaafari also demanded Erdogan withdraw Turkish troops operating illegally in Syrian territory, saying his regime “cannot simultaneously start fires and then act like a firefighter.”

Conflict resolution in Syria is nowhere near being achieved. Much depends on Trump’s intentions as they become better known. Early signs aren’t encouraging.

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