

Russia: If Syria asks us to send troops, we'll consider it

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Moscow: Russia would consider sending troops to fight in Syria if Damascus asked for them, a spokesman for President Vladimir Putin said Friday.

Dmitry Peskov spoke in response to comments by Syrian Foreign Minister Walid al-Moallem, who denied reports that Russian combat troops were fighting with Syrian troops, but said Syria would ask for Russia's help if needed.

If such a request is made, it will be "discussed and considered," Peskov said.

Amid U.S. concerns over an ongoing Russian military buildup in Syria, Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on Thursday urged Washington and its allies to engage the Syrian government as a "partner" in the fight against the Islamic State group.

The Syrian foreign minister said Russian troops were not yet needed.

"But until now, I believe that the Syrian army is capable and what we frankly need is more ammunition and qualitative weapons to face the qualitative armament of terrorist groups," al-Moallem said in an interview on Syrian television broadcast late Thursday.

He said Russia has "stepped up the pace" of supplying weapons and ammunition.

- AP