

## **Russia launches new wave of air raids in Syria**

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**Damascus, Syria:** Russian warplanes have attacked the Islamic State group and other insurgents in central and northern Syria with a wave of new airstrikes, Syrian and Russian military officials said Saturday.

Russian military spokesman Maj.-Gen. Igor Konashenkov said the warplanes flew 20 missions in Syria over the past day, hitting nine IS targets. He said an IS command post and a weapons storage bunker were destroyed in the area of Raqqa, the extremists' de facto capital.

In Damascus, an unnamed Syrian military official was quoted by state TV as saying that the "concentrated and precise" airstrikes destroyed a command center in the central town of Latamneh in Hama province and targeted positions in the northwestern areas of Jisr al-Shughour and Maaret al-Numan.

Konashenkov said equipment and weapons storage facilities were destroyed in a strike near Jisr al-Shughour and an ammunition depot was destroyed in Maaret al-Numan.

The IS group has no presence in the northwestern province of Idlib, which includes Jisr al-Shughour and Maaret al-Numan.

The Russian airstrikes that began Wednesday have mainly targeted central and northwestern Syria, strategic regions that are the gateway to President Bashar Assad's strongholds in the capital, Damascus, and the coast.

Russia says it is targeting the IS group and al-Qaida's Syrian affiliate, but at least some of the strikes appear to have hit Western-backed rebel factions.

- AP