

Russia no more using country's airbase for Syria strikes: Iran

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Tehran: Iran's Foreign Ministry on Monday announced that Russia has stopped using the country's airbase for launching airstrikes on Syria for the time being.

The announcement comes close on the heels of Iran Defence Ministry's criticism that Russia was having a "kind of show-off and ungentlemanly" attitude by publicizing their actions.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi told reporters in Tehran that the Russian airstrikes on militants in Syria were "temporary, based on a Russian request".

"It is finished, for now," Ghasemi said, without elaborating, here on Monday.

Moscow, which had used the Shahid Nojeh Air Base to refuel its bombers striking Syria at least thrice last week, confirmed that all Russian warplanes that were based in Iran have returned to Russia.

A statement issued by the Russian Defense Ministry on Monday said that as long as Iran agreed, Russia could use the Iranian air base again, depending on the situation in Syria.

Last week, Russia announced it used the airfield, located some 50 kilometers (31 miles) north of the Iranian city of Hamedan. Iranian officials only confirmed Russia's presence a day later.

Russia's ambassador to Tehran, Levan Dzagharyan, also confirmed that all of Moscow's warplanes have been withdrawn from Iran.

Dzagharyan said, however, that he does "not see any reason" why the Russians can't use the Iranian base again.

For Iran, allowing Russia to launch strikes from inside the country is likely to prove unpopular. Many still remember how Russia, alongside Britain, invaded and occupied Iran during World War II to secure oil fields and Allied supply lines. But while Britain withdrew, Russia refused to leave, sparking the first international rebuke by the nascent United Nations Security Council in 1946.

- With AP Inputs