

Russia, Turkey launch first joint airstrikes against ISIS positions in Syria

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Moscow: Russia and Turkey conducted their first joint airstrikes against positions held by the Islamic State terror group in Syria.

Representational pic

The joint aerial exercises on Wednesday were carried out over the ISIS-held city of al-Bab in Syria's northern Aleppo province.

"The operation, conducted with the consent of Syria, involved nine warplanes from the Russian Air Force and eight from the Turkish Air Force," the Head of the Russian General Staff Sergey Rudskoy said.

Calling the operations against the ISIS in that area highly effective Rudskoy said that nearly 36 target objectives were singled out during 48 hours of drone and satellite surveillance carried out prior to the operations.

Al-Bab, located some 30 km from Aleppo, is one of the last urban strongholds of the ISIS in the region.

The Syrian government's recent recapture of urban Aleppo from the predominantly Islamist rebels occupying the city's east boosted its power in a region where President Bashar al-Assad's duress was once waning.

Rudskoy also said the Syrian regime had launched a new offensive to recapture ancient Palmyra, a southern city whose military occupants have alternated between the IS and government troops during years of offensives and counter-offensives.

The joint Turkey-Russia operations came during the nationwide ceasefire adopted on December 30, 2016.

According to the Russian military, the relative success of the cessation in hostilities has paved the way for the conflict resolution meeting between Assad and opposition representatives due to be held on January 23 in Astana, Kazakhstan, which would be mediated by Russia and Turkey.

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