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US, Iran Cooperating in Fight Against IS: Former Iranian Diplomat

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Topic: Violence Erupts as Islamic State Rises (125)

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A former senior Iranian diplomat claims that the United States and Iran are in de-facto cooperation against Islamic State extremists.

WASHINGTON, November 21 (Sputnik) — The United States and Iran are in de-facto cooperation against [Islamic State](#) (IS) extremists, a former senior Iranian diplomat has said at a conference in Washington, DC.

"Practically, Iranians and Americans are cooperating now against IS. Directly or indirectly, whatever you want to call it," the former head of the Foreign Relations Committee of Iran's National Security Council Hossein Mousavian said Thursday.

While the US leads the air campaign against IS, also known as the Islamic State of Iraq and Greater Syria (ISIS) or the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), both the Iranian Army and Iranian-aligned forces in Iraq and Syria are fighting on the ground against the Sunni extremist group, Mousavian argued, saying that "Iranians, if they aren't leading the ground forces, they are a key element".

Mousavian said that the real power fighting IS in Syria is the government of President Bashar Assad, and any move to overthrow the government would lead to the empowerment of IS.

"If today Assad collapses, you will have a much worse situation in Syria," Mousavian

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stressed.

Mousavian suggested that for a successful fight against IS, cooperation between regional powers such as Iran, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Iraq would be necessary.

"We need Islamic forces, not Western countries," Mousavian said, recalling that previous US military intervention in Iraq and Afghanistan has had "disastrous consequences" and fostered terrorism in the Middle East.

The US has denied cooperating with Iran in the fight against IS, although the administration of US President Barack Obama has stated that the United States is coordinating with Iraq.

IS is a Sunni jihadi group that has been fighting the Syrian government since 2012. In June 2014, it launched an offensive in Iraq, seizing vast areas in both countries and announcing the establishment of an Islamic caliphate on the territories under its control.

The United States started launching airstrikes against IS positions in Iraq in August.

In September, Obama announced his decision to form an international anti-IS coalition. Washington extended its airstrikes against the militants into Syria, while continuing airstrikes against the group's targets in Iraq.

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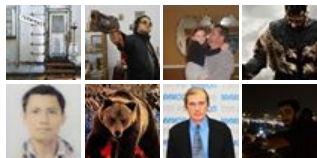
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