Beat: Politics

WHITE HOUSE TO DEPLOY US SPECIAL OPERATIONS FORCES IN SYRIA

THE MISSION OF US ADVISERS IN SYRIA

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USPA NEWS - American President Barack Obama has ordered up to fifty special operations troops to Syria, U.S. officials announced on Friday, in an apparent breach of a promise not to put US 'boots on the ground'. The Pentagon has also been “consulting“ with the Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi,...

American President Barack Obama has ordered up to fifty special operations troops to Syria, U.S. officials announced on Friday, in an apparent breach of a promise not to put US 'boots on the ground'. The Pentagon has also been “consulting“ with the Iraqi prime minister, Haider al-Abadi, to establish a special operations taskforce to fight Isis 'leaders and networks' across the Syrian border in Iraq, a senior administration official told the Guardian on Friday.

The deployment of U.S. Special Operations forces is the most significant escalation of the American military campaign against ISIS to date.

'The President does expect that they can have an impact in intensifying our strategy for building the capacity of local forces inside of Syria for taking the fight on the ground to ISIL in their own country,' White House Press Secretary Josh Earnest said, using another acronym for ISIS. 'That has been the core element of the military component of our strategy from the beginning: building the capacity of local forces on the ground.'

He was also careful to insist: 'These forces do not have a combat mission.'

The move came as diplomats worked in Vienna to restart talks on a political transition that would remove Syrian president Bashar al-Assad. At the discussions with leaders from Russia, Saudi Arabia and Iran, the US secretary of state, John Kerry, framed the troop announcement as part of a shifting policy that included this major diplomatic push to initiate talks that would bring about a political transition in Syria. (The Guardian)

In addition to the Special Operations deployment, Mr. Obama authorized deploying A-10 and F-15 warplanes to Incirlik Air Base in Turkey. The A-10s are capable of providing close in-air support to fighters on the ground. The F-15s can carry out a range of air-to-ground combat missions.

The Pentagon wants to build a firewall behind forces allied with the United States (both the Kurds and the Syrian-Arab coalition backed by Mr. Obama) to allow these fighters to hold territory they have captured. Part of the way to do that, one Defense Department official said, is to ensure that equipment is delivered and that subsequent supplies will reach these forces quickly... The move could potentially put the American troops in the cross hairs of Russia, which last month began airstrikes on antigovernment forces in Syria. A senior Pentagon official said the United States had not informed Moscow about where the American forces will be...' (NYTimes)

Russia has been conducting precision airstrikes on IS positions in Syria at the request of President Bashar al-Assad since September 30, which, according to the Russian General Staff, have already resulted in a large-scale militant retreat and the loss of much of their weaponry and equipment. However, operations without a nod from the official government or UN authorization don't have legitimacy under international law. 'Any operations “ air based operations, ground based operations “ in Syria by American forces will be illegal,' Konstantin Kosachev, the head of Russia´s parliamentary committee on foreign affairs, told RT earlier this week, commenting on the potential involvement of US ground troops against ISIS in Iraq and Syria. (RT)

A $500m effort over the last two years by the United States to train Arab opposition forces in Syria failed. General Lloyd Austin, commander of US Central Command, told the Senate last month that it had resulted in only a handful of fighters actively battling the jihadi army. 'We´re talking four or five,' Austin said. The change in approach in Syria coincides with Russian intervention against a variety of rebel groups fighting Assad and a decision to invite Iran to the Vienna peace talks. (The Guardian)

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