

Russia Calls for Joint Effort With U.S. to Fight Islamic State

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Shi'ite fighters from Mahdi Army take cover during heavy fighting with Islamic state members at Bo Hassan village in near Tikrit, northern Iraq.

Russia's deputy foreign minister on Monday called for a joint effort between Moscow and Washington in fighting the radical group Islamic State, but appeared to play down fears of a high number of Russians in the group.

"The Americans say terrorism represents a direct threat to their national security. I think the same can be said for any country, including Russia," Mikhail Bogdanov said in an interview with business daily Kommersant published Monday.

Calling the group "an international terrorist collective," Bogdanov said the group's members, now fighting in both Syria and Iraq, come from between 70 and 80 different countries, including Russia.

"They get training [in Syria and Iraq], acquire skills, and that's why they represent an exceptional threat to the national security of [the fighters'] countries. On top of that, they have passports, particularly from Western countries, which allows them to move around the world freely, without visas and additional checks. It's very dangerous. And that's another factor that should prompt us [the U.S. and Russia] to join efforts in fighting this threat," Bogdanov was cited as saying.

But when asked approximately how many Russians were fighting alongside the Islamic State, Bogdanov said: "I think we're talking about a few dozen."

Bogdanov's estimate comes in stark contrast to an earlier report by British newspaper The Independent, which put the number of Russians fighting alongside the Islamic State in Syria alone at about 800.

Despite the fact that the Islamic State poses a major international threat, American officials have said that diplomatic efforts from the highest political levels down to clandestine informal channels have failed to resolve mistrust between the U.S. and Russia, such that would enable the two countries to create a united front against the terrorist organization, Reuters reported Sunday.

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