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**RUSSIA SAYS TURKEY COULD PROVIDE İNCIRLIK BASE FOR MOSCOW'S SYRIA CAMPAIGN**

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A member of Russias upper house of parliament has reportedly suggested that Turkey could provide its İncirlik air base for Russian Air Forces jets in their campaign across the border in Syria.

Turkey could provide the İncirlik base to the Russian Aerospace Forces for its use in counterterrorism operations [in Syria]. This could become a logical continuation of Turkish President [Recep Tayyip] Erdoğan's step toward Russia, Senator Viktor Ozerov, member of the Russian Federation Council Defense and Security Committee, was quoted as saying by RIA Novosti on Aug. 16.

According to Russian news agencies, Ozerov did not rule out that Ankara could offer the use of its air base after Erdoğan's reconciliatory visit to St. Petersburg last week, where he affirmed support for Russias anti-terrorist mission in Syria.

It is not guaranteed that Russia needs İncirlik, but such a decision could be regarded as Turkeys real readiness to cooperate with Russia in the fight against terrorism in Syria, and not just pay lip service, Ozerov was also quoted as saying.

Turkey opened its İncirlik base to the U.S.-led anti-ISIL coalition in July 2015 after a bilateral agreement was signed among both parties.

Ozerov also clarified that the decision could be taken based on similar agreements made with Syria on the use of the Hmeymim facility and the latest use of the Hamadan airfield in western Iran to carry out airstrikes in Syria, the Russian news website Sputnik reported on Aug. 16.

The Russian senators remarks came just days after Turkey called on Moscow to carry out joint operations against the jihadist Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in Syria, following crucial

talks between President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Erdoğan aimed at ending a diplomatic crisis.

Çavuşoğlu's remarks on Aug. 11 were delivered as a Turkish delegation was in Russia for talks aimed at coordinating actions on Syria and other bilateral issues.

We will discuss all details. We have always called on Russia to carry out anti-Daesh [ISIL] operations together, he said in a live interview with the private broadcaster NTV, noting that the proposal was still on the table.

Erdoğan visited Russia's second city of Saint Petersburg on Aug. 9, in his first trip abroad since the July 15 coup attempt. It was also his first direct meeting with Putin since the shooting-down of a Russian fighter jet by Turkish air forces on the Syrian border in late November that caused unprecedented damage to relations.

NATO member Turkey was long criticized by its Western partners for not playing a full role in the fight against ISIL. Yet Turkey upped its involvement last summer by offering U.S. forces use of its Incirlik air base for raids against the group.

Turkey has also carried out air and artillery strikes of its own against ISIL, although it is believed to have halted the air strikes in the wake of the Russian plane incident. Artillery fire directed at ISIL has, nonetheless, continued.

At the time, the Turkish foreign minister also said real time communication was needed between the two countries' presidents and military officials, suggesting that a hotline should be established.

Still, Ankara and Moscow still disagree on how to resolve the Syrian conflict, with Russian forces carrying out a bombing campaign in support of President Bashar al-Assad but Ankara considering al-Assad's exit as a key to any solution.

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Kaynak/Source: