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## **RUSSIA CAN USE IRAN BASES FOR ANTI-TERROR BATTLE IN SYRIA: ZARIF**

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Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says Iran could, if necessary, allow Russia to use its military bases on a case by case basis for missions against terrorists in Syria.

Russia doesn't have a military base (in Iran), we have good cooperation, and on a case by case basis, when it is necessary for Russians fighting terrorism to use Iranian facilities, we will make a decision, Reuters quoted Zarif as saying in Moscow on Tuesday.

The top Iranian diplomat, who is accompanying President Hassan Rouhani on his two-day visit to Moscow, further said that regional issues, including the crisis in Syria, would be discussed at the upcoming meeting in the Kremlin with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

Last August, Russia announced that its planes had used a base in western Iran to carry out counter-terrorism air raids in Syria.

On 16 August [2016], Tu-22M3 long-range bombers and Su-34 frontline bombers, flying with a full bomb load from the Hamedan air base, conducted a group airstrike against targets of Daesh and Jabhat Fath al-Sham terrorist groups in the Syrian provinces of Aleppo, Dayr al-Zawr and Idlib, a Russian Defense Ministry statement said back then.

Just days later, Moscow confirmed that all warplanes based in Iran had returned to Russia.

At that time, Iranian Defense Minister Brigadier General Hossein Dehqan said that as long as Iran agreed, Russia could use the air base again depending on the situation in Syria.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi said at the time that Russian airstrikes on militants in Syria were temporary, based on a Russian request.

Last month, Supreme National Security Council Secretary Ali Shamkhani stressed that Russia continues to use Iran's airspace as part of a strategic cooperation between the two countries.

Iran and Russia have been assisting the Syrian government in its fight against foreign-backed terrorist groups wreaking havoc in the Arab country since 2011.

Moscow launched its campaign against Daesh and other terror outfits in Syria at the Damascus government's request in September 2015. Its airstrikes have helped Syrian forces advance against militant groups fighting to overthrow President Bashar Assad's government.