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**RUSSIAN DIPLOMAT, IRAQI OFFICIALS DISCUSS COOPERATION, REGIONAL ISSUES**

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11.04.2019

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TASS (11 April 2019)

MOSCOW

Russian Special Presidential Envoy for the Middle East and Africa Mikhail Bogdanov has held a series of working meetings with Iraqi officials to discuss the situation in the region and the prospects for bilateral cooperation, the Russian Foreign Ministry said in a statement following Bogdanov's visit to Baghdad.

In particular, the senior Russian diplomat met with Iraqi President Barham Salih, Prime Minister Adil Abdul-Mahdi and parliament speaker Mohammed al-Halbusi. The meetings also involved Gazprom Neft CEO Alexander Dyukov.

"The parties discussed ways to boost mutually beneficial cooperation between Russia and Iraq in various areas. In this regard, they considered preparations for the eighth meeting of the Russian-Iraqi Commission on Trade, Economic, Scientific and Technical Cooperation, scheduled to take place in Baghdad in late April," the statement reads.

When discussing the situation in the Middle East, particularly in Iraq and Syria, the parties confirmed their intention to continue joint efforts to prevent "the spiral of confrontation from unwinding and military and political tensions in the region from escalating." "Moscow and Baghdad reiterated that there was no alternative to resolving crises based on international law and the United Nations Charter. They also emphasized the need to continue joint fight against the terrorist threat emanating from the Islamic State terror group [outlawed in Russia - TASS] and units affiliated with it," the Russian Foreign Ministry added.

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