

Syrian Cease-Fire Officially Dead

Those who look at the Syrian civil war and the growing hostilities between the U.S. and Russia as a potential trigger for end-times prophecy likely took note of new developments Monday afternoon.

The U.S. State Department, citing failures on the part of Russia to abide by its terms of the cease-fire agreement in Syria, announced it was backing out of the agreement entirely. The full statement read:

The United States is suspending its participation in bilateral channels with Russia that were established to sustain the Cessation of Hostilities. This is not a decision that was taken lightly. The United States spared no effort in negotiating and attempting to implement an arrangement with Russia aimed at reducing violence, providing unhindered humanitarian access, and degrading terrorist organizations operating in Syria, including Daesh and al-Qaida in Syria.

Unfortunately, Russia failed to live up to its own commitments—including its obligations under international humanitarian law and UNSCR 2254—and was also either unwilling or unable to ensure Syrian regime adherence to the arrangements to which Moscow agreed. Rather, Russia and the Syrian regime have chosen to pursue a military course, inconsistent with the Cessation of Hostilities, as demonstrated by their intensified attacks against civilian areas, targeting of critical infrastructure such as hospitals and preventing humanitarian aid from reaching civilians in need, including through the September 19 attack on a humanitarian aid convoy.

The U.S. will also withdraw personnel that had been

dispatched in anticipation of the possible establishment of the Joint Implementation Center. To ensure the safety of our respective military personnel and enable the fight against Daesh, the United States will continue to utilize the channel of communications established with Russia to de-conflict counterterrorism operations in Syria.

Russian President Vladimir Putin ratcheted up the tension further by announcing his country would be suspending an agreement, concluded in 2000, which bound the two sides to dispose of surplus plutonium originally intended for use in nuclear weapons. In doing so, he signaled a willingness to use nuclear disarmament as a new bargaining chip in disputes with the U.S.

Putin sent a piece of proposed legislation to his parliament, which outlined the ways the U.S. could get both agreements back on track. His list of demands, according to U.S. foreign policy experts, would require several wholesale reversals of longstanding national policy.