

# Statement by Pentagon Press Secretary Peter Cook on US-Russia Video Conference Discussing the Flight Safety Memorandum of Understanding

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Immediate Release

Feb. 29, 2016

The Department of Defense today held a video conference co-chaired by Acting Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs Elissa Slotkin and Joint Staff Director for Strategic Plans and Policy Lt. Gen. Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr. with Russian Ministry of Defense counterparts to discuss ongoing implementation of the U.S.-Russia memorandum of understanding (MOU) on flight safety over Syrian airspace.

The two sides discussed measures to enhance operational safety for counter-ISIL coalition and Russian military forces operating in Syria, including the means to avoid accidents and unintended confrontation between coalition and Russian forces whenever the two sides operate in close proximity.

Separate consultations are ongoing through other channels to address the Cessation of Hostilities agreement developed by the International Syria Support Group (ISSG) members in Munich on February 12, 2016. Today's video conference was intended to focus solely on safety issues and is not a forum to discuss issues related to the implementation of the Cessation of Hostilities agreement.

Today's meeting follows previous video conferences between the Department of Defense and the Russian Ministry of Defense in January 2016 and October 2015 to discuss the safety of coalition air operations in Syria.

The conversation was constructive and the two sides agreed to continue safety discussions in this format in the future.