



Expanding Russia's Military Presence in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: The Russian military will soon celebrate its 5th anniversary of combat operations in Syria. While the Kremlin leadership had previously announced that the military had completed its mission and would reduce the number of forces in Syria, it now appears that “Russia intends to expand its bases in Syria” as the title from the popular daily *Komsomolskaya Pravda* contends. The author (military journalist, Victor Baranets) points out that Russia has already extended and expanded its basing rights at Tartus, “according to which up to 11 Russian ships can be based,” and plans to extend its presence at the airbase at Khmeimim “indefinitely.” While Baranets does not provide specifics, he insists that “in Syria, the number of Russian combat aircraft and ships, and along with land personnel, will increase.”

According to Baranets, the impetus behind this increase revolves around Moscow's intention “to build up a ‘fist’ for the final defeat of the terrorist ‘viper in Idlib,’ and at the same time let Turkey know that the Russians are not supportive of its solution.” The author describes other countries in the region where the Russian military has recently staked an interest (e.g. Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Libya), declaring that “it's just right to talk about the “global” breakthrough of Moscow in the Middle East.” The author concludes by positing that energy considerations help to explain the Kremlin's increased military involvement in this region, declaring that “Russia is clearly transforming its plans to establish control of the ‘gas station of the world,’ asserting that “her desire to thoroughly entrench herself in the Syrian bridgehead in advance is a visionary step...”

A few of the reader comments support the author's analysis, stating that increasing the Russian military footprint in Syria is a “very correct and timely decision! Russia projects power in other countries! Pindos [Americans] are afraid of us!” Others are less optimistic, claiming that “there is no doubt that as soon as all the bases are rebuilt, Russia will leave without any compensation, and the irremovable leader [Putin] will say that we do not need them: we have satellites.” Others wonder about the cost, questioning “Is that where the money saved on retirees went?” while still others point to other recent military operations: “And how did the Venezuelan adventure end?” **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

“It's just right to talk about the “global” breakthrough of Moscow in the Middle East.... Russia is clearly breaking its plans to establish control of the “gas station of the world.”

Source: Victor Baranets, “Россия намерена расширить свои базы в Сирии (Russia intends to expand its bases in Syria),” *Komsomolskaya Pravda*, 29 May 2020. <https://www.volgograd.kp.ru/daily/27136.5/4227073/>

The news, fluttered out of the Kremlin on Friday night, is a military-political sensation. President Putin instructed the ministries of defense and foreign affairs to negotiate with Syria on the transfer of additional real estate to the Russian military and an impressive “piece” of the Mediterranean....

...The first conclusion, which suggests itself here, is that Syria gives the green light to expanding the military presence of Russia in its “Arab apartment”. Both on land and at sea. It is worth recalling that the draft protocol No. 1 to the agreement on the deployment of a Russian aviation group in Syria on August 26, 2015 has already been approved by the government. This group of Russian VKS was created on September 30, 2015 to support the Syrian government forces in the war on terrorists. By agreement between Moscow and Damascus, it is deployed on the territory of the Syrian air base Khmeimim indefinitely. Khmeimim is Russia's largest military base in Syria. From here, planes took off, striking targets of militants fighting the regime of Bashar al-Assad.

And in 2017, Russia and Syria signed another agreement, according to which up to 11 Russian ships can be based in Tartus, including those equipped with nuclear power plants (in other words, it was about our nuclear submarines). It was also planned to expand the ship repair capabilities of the base in Tartus.

The agreement is designed for 49 years and is automatically extended for another 25. The second conclusion is also obvious: in Syria, the number of Russian combat aircraft and ships, and along with land personnel, will increase. On the one hand, this indicates that Moscow intends to build up a “fist” for the final defeat of the terrorist “viper in Idlib,” and at the same time let Turkey know that, according to its scenario, the solution to this problem will not work.

...Russia is clearly on the side of Syria, Russia in recent years has established partnerships with Iran, Russia has significantly strengthened its economic and military-technical relations with Egypt and Algeria. Here it is worth adding Libya. It's just right to talk about the “global” breakthrough of Moscow in the Middle East.... Russia is clearly breaking its plans to establish control of the “gas station of the world.” And the struggle for energy, as you know, will very much determine in this century the “formula” of international relations. And Moscow clearly does not want to be “last in line” here. Her desire to thoroughly entrench herself in the Syrian bridgehead in advance is a visionary step ...

Reader comments:

June 1, 10:24 the guest

There is no doubt that as soon as all the bases are rebuilt, Russia will leave without any compensation, and the irremovable leader will say that we do not need it: we have satellites.

June 1, 04:37 Yuri

Is that where the money saved on retirees went?

May 31, 18:45 Grandfather Coat

very correct and timely decision! Russia projects power in other countries! Pindos are afraid of us!

May 30, 04:47 the guest

And how did the Venezuelan adventure end?



Russian soldiers during Vladimir Putin's visit to Khmeimim Air Base in Syria, 11 Dec 2017.

Source: President of Russia, <http://en.kremlin.ru/events/president/news/56351>, CCA 4.0 Intl