



## Russian Praise of Syrian Air Defense

**OE Watch Commentary:** The Kremlin's decision to intervene militarily in Syria in September 2015 was ostensibly predicated upon a request from the Syrian government to help destroy terrorist formations within the country. Since then, the Kremlin has largely adopted the Syrian government's perspective, whereby any group which opposes the Assad government has been labeled as "terrorist." Not surprisingly, the Russian military mission has morphed into supporting the Assad government, regardless of the weapons employed by Syrian government forces.

Since US coalition forces struck Syrian targets with cruise missiles on 14 April, there has been considerable debate over how many of these coalition cruise missiles were shot down by Syrian Air Defense forces. The brief excerpted article from the moderately pro-Kremlin source, *Vzglyad*, discusses why the Russian Ministry of Defense (MoD) has recently revised its calculations regarding how many coalition missiles were destroyed by Syrian air defense.

Initially the Russian MoD "stated that 71 enemy missiles (of the 103 launched) were shot down, now only 46 are mentioned." According to General Staff Main Operational Directorate Chief Colonel-General Sergey Rudskoy, this claim is based on "reconnaissance data and the data recordings from the PVO complexes that we have obtained, work on the terrain, and the interviews of witnesses attest that 46 cruise missiles were destroyed by the Pantsir, Osa, Strela-10, Buk, Kvadrat, and S-125 air defense missile systems." The initial boast of destroying "71 enemy missiles" was predicated on the MoD's "rush to conclusions." Curiously, the paper notes that the new revised number of 46 downed missiles coincides with Defense Minister Shoygu's assertion "that 35 percent of the missiles had been shot down." The article describes how Russian military experts have displayed cruise missile fragments proving the effectiveness of the Syrian air defense systems, concluding that Western military leaders "have embellished their 'victory' of 14 April."

The Kremlin-sponsored media not only provides wide coverage of the Russian military exploits in Syria, but also depicts the conflict from a pro-Assad perspective. While the exact number of coalition missiles launched on 14 April destroyed by Syrian air defense may never be known, there's no question which side the Kremlin leadership supports, regardless of the means which the Assad government employs. **End OE Watch Commentary (Finch)**

**Source:** Aleksey Nechayev and Yuriy Zaynashev, "Почему Генштаб изменил количество сбитых в Сирии крылатых ракет (Why the General Staff Changed the Number of Cruise Missiles That Were Shot Down in Syria)," *Vzglyad*, 25 April 2018. <https://vz.ru/politics/2018/4/25/873329.html>

*The RF General Staff has reduced the assessment of the Syrian air defense achievements in the duel with the Western Coalition on 14 April. If it was initially stated that 71 enemy missiles (of the 103 launched) were shot down, now only 46 are mentioned. Why does the fate of dozens of other missiles remains unexplained and why did the Russian Military Department make these corrections?*

*On Wednesday, the General Staff displayed to the public fragments of the cruise missiles, which were launched against Syria on 14 April. These are fragments of the US-manufactured Tomahawk sea-launched cruise missiles and of the SCALP and Storm Shadow air-launched cruise missiles that were manufactured by England and France....*

*...The fragments of the downed missiles have serial numbers, which will permit us to easily determine the ownership of the weapons, General Staff Main Operational Directorate Chief Colonel-General Sergey Rudskoy added. Furthermore, Rudskoy stated new data on the operation's results. The difference between the new numbers and those, which that same General cited on the morning of the 14th, immediately aroused attention.*

*"The reconnaissance data and the data recordings from the PVO complexes that we have obtained, work on the terrain, and the interviews of witnesses attest that 46 cruise missiles were destroyed by the Pantsir, Osa, Strela-10, Buk, Kvadrat, and S-125 air defense missile systems, which cover the Syrian capital and the Syrian Air Forces' nearby airfields of Dyuvali, Dumeir, Bley, and Mezze," the General pointed out.*

*However, immediately after the strike, Rudskoy said: 71 missiles were shot down, in other words, more than 70 percent of the more than 100 that were launched against Syria....*

*...In any case, the Ministry of Defense essentially acknowledged that they had rushed to the conclusions, which were made public immediately after the bombardment.*

*According to Vzglyad Newspaper's data, [Defense] Department Head Sergey Shoygu had calculated at an internal meeting already a week ago that 35 percent of the missiles had been shot down. This coincides with Rudskoy's new data...*

*...Both Donald Trump and the Pentagon confirmed that the Syrian PVO in general did not show itself and the defenders of the Syrian skies did not manage to shoot down a single missile. Our General Staff's summarized data, and also the missile fragments that have been displayed to the press now indicate the obvious deception, which the US President and his generals permitted themselves.*

*Let's point out that two of the 105 missiles, and precisely a Tomahawk and an aircraft precision-guided missile, have already been delivered to Moscow. Experts are studying them right now. The fact of their delivery to the Russian capital irrefutably proves that Trump and the Pentagon, putting it mildly, have embellished their "victory" of 14 April.*

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