

Multiple Drones Attack Russian Airbase in Syria

OE Watch Commentary: According to Russian and other sources, on 5 January 2018, Russia's Khmeimim Air Base in Syria was attacked with multiple drones. Taken together, the reports demonstrate the emergence of a new tactic in the terrorist and insurgent playbook, war reporting in Russia, and how propaganda evolves.

According to the *TASS* official news website, on 5 January 2018, Russian forces at Khmeimim Air Base successfully defended themselves from an attack by 13 drones. Quoting an official Russian Defense Ministry (MoD) report, TASS stated there were no casualties and no equipment damage. The *Moskovsky Komsomolets* newspaper added that the Ministry's press release about the attack indicated that it was the first time "the terrorists" have carried out a mass attack using drones. According to *Sputnik News*, the Russian MoD said the attack had been foiled. While ten of the drones targeted the Khmeimim Air Base and three others were sent toward the Tartus Naval Base, all of the drones were downed in a controlled area outside the base. Three were detonated when they hit the ground and seven were destroyed by Pantsir-S air defense missile systems. MoD's *Facebook* post indicated that the six drones not destroyed by the Pantsir-S were intercepted by Russian Electronic Warfare complexes, which took over control of their trajectory.

Moskovsky Komsomolets posited that the attempted attack marks the first time the terrorists have used modern guidance technologies on satellite GPS because the drones used were capable of carrying out attacks from a range of about 100 kilometers. According to the MoD's *Facebook* post, Russian specialists are currently determining supply channels through which terrorists obtained the technologies and devices, as well as examining the type and origin of explosive compounds and foreign detonating fuses carried by the drones. The MoD also stated that these "aircraft-type drones" were fitted with pressure transducers and altitude control servo-actuators. The post also suggested the "terrorists" could have gotten the technology from a country with well-developed technological capabilities of satellite navigation and remote control to drop improvised explosive devices on assigned coordinates. While much of the Defense Ministry's report seemed to be confirmed by The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, as reported by BBC.ru, according to them, the drones were rather primitively constructed with lots of tape and a motor.

In the hours and days following the report of the attack, some Russian officials and casual commentators quoted in *Echo Moskvy*, *Interfax* and TASS suggested that the US or Israel were behind the attack. A particularly ominous comment in *Live Journal* stated: "It won't be so funny once these self-styled drone makers crawl to the four corners of the earth." **End OE Watch Commentary (Wilhelm, Hall, Bartles, Finch, Winter)**

"It won't be so funny once these self-styled drone makers crawl to the four corners of the earth."



Photo of UAV downed during attack on Khmeimim air base, 5-6 Jan 2018.

Source: Russian MoD Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/mod.mil.rus/photos/pcb.2031218563787556/2031214087121337/?type=3&theater>, CCA-4.0.

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The following sources were used in this article:

- 8 January 2018 TASS official news website
- 8 January 2018, Moskovsky Komsomolets
- 9 January 2018 Sputnik News <https://sputniknews.com/military/201801091060605452-russia-create-anti-drone-forces/>
- <http://www.mk.ru/politics/2018/01/08/minoborony-soobshhilo-podrobnosti-ob-atake-dronov-na-bazu-khmeymim.html>
- 7 January 2018, (<http://www.bbc.com/russian/news-42596160>)
- (<https://meduza.io/news/2018/01/07/pravozaschitniki-rasskazali-ob-otbitoy-atake-dronov-na-rossiyskuyu-bazu-v-sirii>). (<http://www.bbc.com/russian/news-42613267>).
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- (<https://echo.msk.ru/news/2125840-echo.html>).
- (<https://twower.livejournal.com/2209550.html#comments>)

Source: Facebook post by the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, *Facebook*, 8 January 2018. <https://www.facebook.com/mod.mil.rus/posts/2031218563787556>

Security system of the Russian Khmeimim air base and Russian Naval CSS point in the city of Tartus successfully warded off a terrorist attack with massive application of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) through the night of 5th – 6th January, 2018.

As evening fell, the Russia air defence forces detected 13 unidentified small-size air targets at a significant distance approaching the Russian military bases.

Ten assault drones were approaching the Khmeimim air base, and another three – the CSS point in Tartus.

Six small-size air targets were intercepted and taken under control by the Russian EW units. Three of them were landed on the controlled area outside the base, and another three UAVs exploded as they touched the ground.

Seven UAVs were eliminated by the Pantsir-S anti-aircraft missile complexes operated by the Russian air defence units on 24-hours alert.

The Russian bases did not suffer any casualties or damages.

The Khmeimim air base and Russian Naval CSS point in Tartus are functioning on a scheduled basis.

Currently, the Russian military experts are analyzing the construction, technical filling and improvised explosives of the captured UAVs...

It was the first time when terrorists applied a massed drone aircraft attack launched at a range of more than 50 km using modern GPS guidance system

Technical examination of the drones showed that such attacks could have been made by terrorists at a distance of about 100 kilometers.

Engineering decisions applied by terrorists while attacks on the Russian objects in Syria could be received from one of countries with high-technological capabilities of satellite navigation and remote dropping control of professionally assembled improvised explosive devices in assigned coordinates. All drones of terrorists are fitted with pressure transducers and altitude control servo-actuators.

Terrorists' aircraft-type drones carried explosive devices with foreign detonating fuses.

The Russian specialists are determining supply channels, through which terrorists had received the technologies and devices, as well as examining type and origin of explosive compounds used in the IEDs. The fact of usage of strike aircraft-type drones by terrorists is the evidence that militants have received technologies to carry out terrorist attacks using such UAVs in any country.



Photo of UAV downed during attack on Khmeimim air base, 5-6 Jan 2018.

Source: Russian MoD Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/mod.mil.rus/photos/pcb.2031218563787556/2031214087121337/?type=3&theater>, CCA-4.0.