

BREAKING: Military Confrontation between Washington and Moscow? Russian Warships head for Syria

By [Global Research](#)

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Moscow is deploying warships at its base in the Syrian port of Tartus. The long-planned mission comes, providentially, at the very moment when it could help prevent a potential conflict in the strategically important Middle Eastern country.

The Russian battle group will consist of three vessels led by the heavy aircraft-carrying missile cruiser, Admiral Kuznetsov.

Russian military officials insist that the move has no connection with the ongoing crisis in the region and was planned a year ago, the Izvestia newspaper reports. Apart from Syria, the aircraft carrier and its escort ships are set to visit the Lebanese capital, Beirut, Genoa in Italy and Cyprus, says the former Chief of Naval Staff, Admiral Viktor Kravchenko.

Nevertheless, he added that the presence of a military force other than NATO's is very useful for this region, because "it will prevent the outbreak of an armed conflict," Izvestia quoted Kravchenko as saying.

The Soviet Union, the Admiral recalled, created a special naval squadron to deter Western military forces in the Mediterranean Sea. To repair and supply its ships, Moscow needed its own maintenance base in the region, and that was how the base in Tartus came into being.

At present, the base is mostly used to support vessels of Russia's Black Sea fleet. Some 600 military and civilian personnel of the Defense Ministry serve there.

News of Russia's naval deployment in Tartus came shortly after the US nuclear-powered aircraft carrier USS George HW Bush anchored off Syria, along with additional naval vessels. The US battle group is to remain in the Mediterranean, allegedly to conduct maritime security operations and support missions as part of Operations Enduring Freedom and New Dawn. The US 6th Fleet is also patrolling the area, Interfax reports.

"Of course, the Russian naval forces in the Mediterranean will be incommensurate with those of the US 6th Fleet, which includes one or two aircraft carriers and several escort ships," Admiral Kravchenko explained.

"But today, no one talks about possible military clashes, since an attack on any Russian ship would be regarded as a declaration of war with all the consequences."

The mission is set to start in early December, when the Admiral Kuznetsov begins its journey in the Barents Sea, accompanied by another vessel of Russia's Northern Fleet, the heavy ASW ship Admiral Chabanenko. The group will then skirt the European continent from the west and enter the Mediterranean through the Strait of Gibraltar.

Later, they will be joined by frigate Ladny of Russia's Black Sea Fleet. It will travel through the Bosphorus, with a stop-over in Malta's Valletta.

Admiral Kuznetsov will be carrying eight Sukhoi Su-33 all-weather fighters, two Kamov Ka-27 anti-submarine helicopters and several brand new Mig-29K fighters. The Mig fighters were built for India's air force and are supposed to be "tested" during their first assignment.

Military officials have stressed that all flights will be performed in open waters, away from the Syrian coast.

Unlike American aircraft carriers, designed largely as floating runways, Admiral Kuznetsov is a heavily-armed aircraft-carrying cruiser. Its primary armaments, among others, are 12 long-range surface-to-surface anti-ship Granit cruise missiles, a six-gun short-range surface-to-air missile system Kinzhal, eight close-in air defense Kashtan gun-missile systems and two UDAV-1 anti-submarine systems.

The Admiral Kuznetsov has already been twice to the port of Tartus during its assignments in the Mediterranean and Atlantic Ocean in 1995 and 2007.

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