

Finally Some Clarity About the Russian Plans in Syria. “Yes, Putin has just Won Another Major Victory against the Empire”

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A lot has happened in the last few hours. Putin spoke at the UN, the Russian Parliament has approved the use of Russian military forces in Syria and Sergei Ivanov has given the Russian media a detailed explanation for the reasons which made the Kremlin request such an authorization. The picture has finally become much clearer.

What will not happen:

There will be no “[Most Anticipated Showdown in Recent History](#)”: no Russian ground operation, no Russian imposition of a no-fly zone (especially not against the US or its allies!), no MiG-31s, no Russian Airborne Forces, no Russian tanks on the frontlines, no Russian SSBN (nuclear weapons carrying) submarines and probably no significant Russians military presence around Damascus. In fact, there will be *no Russian unilateral military operation of any kind*. All that nonsense can now finally be put to rest.

What will happen:

The Russian military operation will be legal on all levels: the Russians have received a formal request for military assistance from the Syrian government, the Russian Parliament has given its authorization, and Russia will seek a UN Security Council authorization. The Russian military operation will be officially limited to air operations including bombings and close air support. The main hub of the Russian operation will be in Latakia. *Crucially, Russia will act as a part of a broad coalition.*

It would be a mistake to focus primarily on what will happen next. I would argue that what has already happened is far more significant.



What has already happened:

Putin has basically forced the USA to accept the Russian plan. Kerry has told CNN that the US policy for Syria will be “adjusted” – in other words the US is giving up on the notion of ousting Assad, officially temporarily. NATO has declared that it would welcome a positive role for Russia in Syria. The Pentagon has followed the Israeli example and has decided to open a special communications channel to coordinate Russian and US operations.

Considering the above, I suppose that the US will give its Bulgarian colony the order to stop closing its airspace to Russian aircraft.

Finally, I will make some guesses as to what might happen next.

What might also happen:

First, I would not be surprised if the Russians did declare that it was their standard operating procedure to protect their military installations with air defense systems. And then would finally bring in their S-300s (I am aware of rumors that the S-300s are already there, but I have seen no confirmation so far). I would expect the Israelis to feel particularly miserable about that, and I would not be surprised if the Russians offered guarantees that these systems would remain exclusively under Russian control. What is already certain is that Netanyahu did fly to Moscow to address issues at least of Russian-Israeli “non-interference,” if not “cooperation.” I would add here that Moscow has no hostile plans towards Israel whatsoever and that, by all accounts, the Russians and Israeli officials get along famously, if only because both sides are smart and pragmatists (they don’t need a love fest, they need responsible behavior).

Second, the official Russian military presence in Syria will give the Russians the perfect cover for all sorts of covert efforts including the delivery of equipment, joint intelligence operations and even direct action missions. I don’t think that this will be a major part of the Russian effort, but now the option is definitely here.

Third, and this is admittedly 100% my own speculations, I believe that the entire Russian military effort will be a cover for something else: a larger Iranian and Hezbollah involvement. Why? For one thing, there is only that much any air operation can achieve. ***There is no reason to assume that a very small Russian Air Force contingent will significantly change the course of the war.*** The total failure of the NATO airforces over Kosovo has proven that air operations are, by themselves, of very limited capability, and, unlike NATO in Kosovo, Russia will send a rather small contingent of aircraft. However, the presence of the Russian Air Force in the Syrian skies could conveniently “explain away” any sudden military reversals for Daesh, especially if the real reason for such reversals would be a beefed up Iranian intervention. Again, I have absolutely no information confirming any of that, but I personally expect a sharp rise in the Iranian and Hezbollah efforts to push back Daesh.

Evaluation:

In purely military terms this is a rather minor development. Yes, the Syrian Air Force badly needs some modernization (the fact that they are using helicopter-dropped 500kg barrel bombs is a proof that they don’t have enough aircraft to deliver guided or even unguided 500kg aerial bombs) and the Russians will be bringing some very capable aircraft (SU-24s and SU-25s for sure, and in some specific cases they could even use Tu-22M3s and SU-34s). But this will not be a game changer. Politically, however, this marks yet another triumph for Vladimir Putin, who has forced the US Empire to renounce its plans to overthrow Assad. Because—and make no mistake here—the Russians are now there to stay: a limited Russian military presence will now turn into a major Russian political commitment. Furthermore, not only will Tartus continue to serve a fairly limited but not irrelevant role for the Russian Navy, the airbase in Latakia will become a hub of Russian military operations and, in effect, a

forward operating base for the Black Sea Fleet.

Conclusion: a game changer after all?

Yes. But not because of the Russian military move. Consider this: for the United States the main purpose of Daesh was to overthrow Assad. Now that the US is declaring that they “don’t plan to arm the Syrian rebels at the moment” and that Assad will not be overthrown, the utility of Daesh to the Anglo-Zionist Empire has just taken a major hit. If the Empire decides that Daesh has outlived its utility and that it has now turned into a liability, then the days of Daesh are numbered.

Of course, I am under no illusions about any real change of heart in the imperial “deep state”. What we see now is just a tactical adaptation to a situation which the US could not control, not a deep strategic shift. The rabid russophobes in the West are still out there (albeit [some have left in disgust](#)) and they will now have the chance to blame Russia for anything and everything in Syria, especially if something goes really wrong.

Yes, Putin has just won another major victory against the Empire (where are those who claimed that Russia had “sold out” Syria?!), but now Russia will have to manage this potentially “dangerous victory”.

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