

Russian Navy Back in Syria

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Russian warships have returned to the naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus, used by the Soviet Union since the late sixties, after more than a decade of absence.

In August 2008, Syrian president Bashar Assad, during his visit to Russia, pointed out that his country is open for talks with Russia about reactivating the use of the naval base in Tartus.

It was in 1967 that the Soviet Navy started using this Syrian port as one of its main Mediterranean stations.

Back in Soviet times about nine Russian warships used to be on constant service in the port of Tartus.

“We really helped Syria to build up its naval fleet. But it is also necessary to maintain it. Very often Syrian commanders would come to one of my ships asking to share some spare parts or oil and so on,” remembers Admiral Valeriy Selivanov – commander of the 5th Soviet Mediterranean Navy Squadron, the man who was in charge of this naval force – in regards to how warm relations were back then.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia withdrew its ships from the region, but the relations never faded. During the past few years the Russian ships of the Black Sea Fleet have started visiting Syria again. At the beginning of this year, for the first time in 13 years, the fleet dropped anchor in Tartus.

Many see it as a sign that Russia could be seeking to revive its naval influence in the region.

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