

Russian Navy squadron to sail to Syrian port

By [Global Research](#)

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Interfax

A Russian Navy squadron is about to set out for the Syrian port of Tartus, to guarantee security of a Russian supply and maintenance naval base there.

A source in the Russian Navy Main Staff has told the Interfax news agency that a squadron of two large landing ships with marines on board and a rescue tug are almost through with their preparations, and will soon head for the Mediterranean.

The source told the news agency that the order to protect Russia's interests off the Syrian coast had come unexpected. The Russian General Staff earlier reported about Moscow's decision to send naval ships to the area.

RT

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Russian warships 'on way to Syria' to defend own citizens
Robert Bridge

It is being reported that large Russian amphibious naval ships are steaming toward the Syrian port of Tartus, where Russian civilians and naval infrastructure are under threat from ongoing civil disorder.

"The crews of the Nikolay Filchenkov, Ceasar Kunikov and SB-15 tugboat - together with the marine units they carry - are capable of protecting security of Russian citizens and evacuating a part of the property of the logistics base," a source at the Russian Navy General Staff told Interfax-AVN on Monday.

But according to an officer stationed with the Black Sea Fleet, the Nikolay Filchenkov and Ceasar Kunikov are still sitting in dock in Sevastopol.

Moreover, the crew is said to be on "regular service duty" and are under no emergency orders. He pointed out, however, that Russian naval ships must be prepared to dispatch anywhere within 12 hours.

There has also been speculation over Russia's Syrian logistics base in Tartus, which operates the PM-138 floating workshop. This facility provides technical maintenance of Russian warships deployed in the Mediterranean Sea.

The Russian Black Sea Fleet's Iman tanker, with an anti-terrorist squad aboard, completed a mission off the coast of Syria in May; that same month, plans for the Moscow missile-carrying cruiser of the Black Sea Fleet to patrol the Syrian coastline was canceled in May.

Meanwhile, The Professor Katsman, a cargo vessel, pulled into Tartus on May 26. Some Russian and foreign media outlets speculated that the vessel delivered Russian weapons to the Syrian authorities that could be used to fight the opposition.

Russia denied the claims, stressing that it only provides Syria with defensive weapons to protect it from outside attack.

Last week, the rhetoric between Moscow and Washington escalated when US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton told a press conference that Russia was supplying combat helicopters to the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad. The delivery of the helicopters, she said, would "escalate the conflict quite dramatically."

Russia quickly extinguished the inflammatory comments, saying it was merely sending to Syria "old, refurbished helicopters" that it had been repaired and were being returned to Damascus as specified under contractual agreement.

Later, the US State Department issued a statement refuting Clinton's claim.

On the weekend, presidential aide Yury Ushakov said Clinton's unverified statement has helped to poison the atmosphere of the Syrian settlement negotiations ahead of the Los Cabos meeting of Presidents Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama on the G20 summit sidelines.

"The presidents will certainly discuss the Syrian situation. As you know, someone is trying to spoil the negotiations' background," Ushakov said. "The Americans are escalating tensions with their statements, which are refuted later on. For instance, the statement of Clinton was refuted by the Pentagon, which knew the real situation in the deliveries of military hardware and equipment."

"They frequently make statements, update and correct them, while tensions escalate and harm bilateral cooperation," he added.

"Russia and the United States disagree over pressing international issues," Ushakov said, admitting that "disagreements are tactical rather than strategic in the case of Syria."

"Actually, both of us want the same - peace and a democratic choice of the future by the people of Syria," he said.

"Russia unwaveringly supports the beginning of a national dialog in the Syrian Arab Republic, in which the Syrians will choose the political structure of their country. The use of external force is impermissible in this situation."

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