

Russian presence in the Mediterranean: Will it become permanent?

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If the conflict in the Caucasus was about geostrategy, oil, and control of the area, the United States suffered a major set back this week. Kazakhstan , the Caspian energy giant and a key central Asian actor, has decided to support Russia over the conflict with Georgia , and Russia 's actual control over two major black sea ports has been strengthened and solidified.

As Russia maintains its power in the black sea, it has also swiftly moved to bolster its power in the Mediterranean .

“Russia stated Friday on 09-12-08 that it was renovating a Syrian port for use by the Russian fleet, signaling an effort to establish a firmer foothold in the Mediterranean at a time of tensions with the United States over Georgia.” [1]

Syria was Moscow 's loyal Middle East ally during the Cold War, but the alliance faded away after the 1991 collapse of the Soviet experiment. Syrian President Bashar Assad has recently reached out to Russia, in order to find an ally that will help his regime survive the Anglo-American establishment's schemes that are designed to dethrone him and balkanize his country. He has been seeking weapons from Russia and offering broader military cooperation with the Mevedev-Putin government. .

The Associated Press reported that Friday's announcement was the first tangible sign of any new cooperation. The Itar-Tass news agency announced that a vessel from Russia 's Black Sea fleet had begun restoring facilities at Syria 's Mediterranean port of Tartus for use by the Russian military. A Russian naval official, Igor Dygalo, told Itar-Tass that the two countries' naval chiefs also met in Moscow on Friday and discussed “further strengthening mutual trust and mutual understanding between the two states' fleets.” The former Soviet Union had a maintenance and supply facility in Tartus under a 1971 agreement with Damascus , but the deal ended with the fall of the Communist regime in Moscow . Currently the facility at Tartus consists of three floating piers, one of which is currently operational, one floating repair shop, warehouses, barracks and other facilities, according to Russian press reports. [1].

The Tartus restoration project is a clear signal of Russian intent to have a long-term Russian naval presence in that country.

In late August, Russia 's ambassador to Damascus , Igor Belyev, said Russian ships already patrol the area, but “a new development is that the Russian

presence in the Mediterranean will become permanent.” [1].

Russia seems interested in making alliances with the rebel regimes that are anti-globalization and anti-Anglo-American establishment.

Russian bombers this month arrived in Venezuela for training exercises and the two countries are to hold joint exercises in the Caribbean in November. In Moscow , Russian President Dmitry Medvedev said Friday that Russia would build economic and military ties with nations willing to do so even if the West dislikes some of these alliances. He also added that “there are many other interesting places in the world with governments maintaining friendly ties with us, and if they like developing economic, humanitarian and military ties with us, we won’t say no.” [1].

The Georgian conflict seems to have a major awakening effect on the Russian bear to reclaim its geostrategic power and to take stand against the unilateral empire of the Anglo-American establishment.

Is Russia falling into the trap of becoming the new “global monster” to slay? The problem with this picture is that this “monster” (as described by the media) is not an artificial ogre, but a real one with nuclear warheads. Can it all be a bluff on the stage of international politics to make the global military industrial complex stronger, wealthier, and more omnipotent? Or could this be the neocon’s contrived Armageddon signaling the start of a new world conflict that will ensue in more wars, more deaths, more profits, and more control over the masses?

Reference:

[1] Associated Press, Friday, September 12, 2008, Syrian-Russian naval cooperation grows

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