

# Syria: U.S. Deploys Aircraft Carrier, NATO Prepares For War

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The latest multipurpose nuclear aircraft-carrier The George Bush of the US Navy has been redeployed from the Persian Gulf to the Syrian shores. The ship is capable of carrying up to 70 aircraft, including 48 attack jets. The aircraft-carrier is escorted by a group of vessels which contains a destroyer.

In this connection, experts are giving both a pessimistic and comparatively moderate prospect of developments near the Syrian sea border. Maxim Minayev from the Russian analytical Centre of Political Situations says:

“This is preparation for a military operation against Syria. These activities are reminiscent of a similar initiative when a group of NATO vessels were concentrated near Libya. Washington wants to collect a maximum dividend from the series of revolutions in the Middle East and North Africa. With this aim in mind, Washington is likely to start a military intervention even without UN sanctions. Now we are witnessing the first stage of NATO naval contingents drawing up near the Syrian shorelines.”

Oleg Kulakov, an expert in Oriental studies from the Armed Forces University, is not inclined to feel too emotional about the situation.

“The reinforcement of the US aircraft-carrier fleet in the Mediterranean is more likely to be a threat. They are building up muscle in the region and this is undoubtedly an element of strong political intimidation. Military pressure is likely to be augmented by possible diplomatic demarche. However, all this does not mean direct military intervention.”

Meanwhile, whipping up tension around Syria is taking place along different lines as well. The day before The George Bush was redeployed near the Syrian coastline, the Al-Arabiya Saudi TV channel circulated a piece of news from the Russians Are Coming! set. It reported that three Russian Navy ships entered Syrian territorial waters. The TV channel referred to a source close to Syrian top authorities.

This news published by a Saudi newspaper was carried on by the Haaretz Israeli news source and a number of other regional media. The Russian Defence Ministry did not confirm this information in a conversation with The Voice of Russia.

However, there is a Russian naval base in the Syrian port of Tartus, so it is small wonder that Russian Navy ships could be seen there. That port is the only Russian military base abroad at present. The agreement on keeping Soviet facilities there was signed by the Syrian government 40 years ago. At present there are only 50 Russian Black Sea Fleet

sailors there. They have three piers, a floating repair shop, a peripherals warehouse and some utility rooms.

During last year's campaign against Somali pirates the Russian aircraft-carrier The Admiral Kuznetsov called at the base in Tartus. The crew of The Neustrashimy destroyer spent several days at the base before their return from the Gulf of Aden to the home port of Baltiysk. There is a plan to upgrade the base in Tartus, so that it could receive heavy ships after 2012.

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