

Russia Gearing Up to Evacuate Citizens From Syria, Report Says

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The  **Moscow Times**

Russia's military is preparing to evacuate Russian nationals from Syria, including servicemen from the country's naval base at Tartus, media reports said Thursday.

While authorities have not yet issued any concrete orders, plans are being laid in case tensions escalate or outside powers intervene, two sources in the security services told the Vedomosti daily.

The Defense Ministry, Emergency Situations Ministry and other government agencies are involved in the plans, the sources said.

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has spoken of the necessity of helping Russian-passport holders abroad before, saying in April that Russia should be ready to aid the roughly 100,000 Russian citizens who live in Syria with their families.

Thursday's reports come after Defense Ministry officials on Tuesday evening refuted CNN claims that the Navy was soon to send ships to the port of Tartus on the Mediterranean Sea,

where about 100 Russian soldiers and other support staff are based.

Experts have warned that Syria is on the brink of civil war. Attempts to broker a cease-fire between anti-government forces and President Bashar Assad have failed.

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