

Putin Calls on Russia to Boost Arms Exports

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia should boost its arms exports to help the industry upgrade and add more high-end jobs to the labor market, Russian President Vladimir Putin was quoted as saying Monday.

Russia is the focus of military tensions with the West over its annexation of Crimea from Ukraine. It has also been a long-standing arms supplier to Syria and ally of Syrian President Bashar Assad, who opposition forces are seeking to oust.

"It is important to ... strengthen Russia's presence on global arms markets," RIA Novosti quoted Putin as telling a meeting on military cooperation with foreign countries.

"Beyond doubt, this should help national defense industries to plan for an expansion and update of production, [and] create new quality jobs."

Russia is already the world's top arms exporter and sold some \$15.7 billion worth of weapons

abroad — primarily guns, missiles and fighter jets — in 2013.

Other leading buyers of Russian arms include India, China and Venezuela.

Russia is also modernizing its own armed forces and has showcased their new face in the small mobile units that helped seize Crimea earlier this year, prompting the West to slap sanctions on Moscow.

Uncertainty over Russia's military ambitions has led to unease among foreign investors, who have been pulling funds out of the country, in turn damaging a once vibrant economy.

The Economic Development Ministry expects gross domestic product growth to slow sharply to just 0.4 percent this year, though its minister, Alexei Ulyukayev, has said this forecast may be raised.

Net capital outflows from the country may reach about \$80 billion in the first half of the year, Interfax cited Ulyukayev as saying.

Moscow has also stepped up the frequency of unannounced military drills in recent months and Putin has said that practice would continue to keep his army combat-ready.

He also called for further efforts to replace defense industry imports, including from Ukraine, with Russia's own production in an effort to make the country's defense industry self-sufficient.

Russian arms exports in the first half of 2014 reached \$5.6 billion, Putin was quoted as saying.

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