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Obama Expects Gradual 'Shift' in Russia's Syria Strategy

By The Moscow Times

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U.S. President Barack Obama

U.S. President Barack Obama said Tuesday that he expected a "shift" in Russia's strategy in Syria, referring to "fresh memories" in Moscow of the drawn-out Afghan war in the 1980s, Agence France-Presse reported Tuesday.

"I think it is possible over the next several months that we see ... a recognition [in Moscow] that it's time to bring the civil war in Syria to a close," he was reported as saying on the sidelines of a conference on climate change in Paris.

He added that he believed that Russia may eventually align itself with the Western anti-Islamic State coalition, instead of lending support to the beleaguered Syrian President Bashar Assad — a longtime Moscow ally.

"I think Putin understands that — with Afghanistan fresh in the memory for him — to simply

get bogged down in an inconclusive and paralyzing civil conflict is not the outcome that he's looking for," Obama said at a news conference, Reuters reported.

On the same day, he urged Turkey to reduce tensions with Moscow following the downing of a Russian Su-24 bomber on Nov. 24.

"The United States supports Turkey's right to defend itself, its airspace and its territory," he said after a meeting with the Turkish President Recep Erdogan at the climate summit, according to a separate Reuters report.

"We discussed how Turkey and Russia can work together to de-escalate tensions and find a diplomatic path to resolve this issue," he added.

The Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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