

Cyprus Will Let Russian Warplanes Use Its Airports - Minister

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A man walks to the shore while an airplane prepares to land at Larnaca International Airport in Cyprus.

Cyprus and Russia are finalizing a deal in which Russian military planes would be permitted to use the country's airports in case of emergency, Cypriot Foreign Minister Ioannis Kasoulides said Tuesday, Neweurope.eu news media reported.

The same agreement is currently being discussed with France, which is also performing air strikes on Syria, the minister said.

The minister did not specify when the agreement with Russia would be signed.

Cyprus will allow Russia use its airports to evacuate Russian nationals from neighboring countries if necessary.

Russia began air strikes against militant groups in Syria on Sept. 30. Moscow claims it is targeting terrorist groups, though Western analysts say Moscow's real aim is to defend Syrian President Bashar Assad.

Russia's military operations in Syria have so far been conducted using two bases along the Syrian coast — at Tartus and Latakia.

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