

# Russia Expands Syrian Airbase, Says Monitoring Group

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Russia was expanding and fortifying an airbase in Syria's Homs province to accommodate its warplanes, and using yet another one, also near Homs, for helicopter sorties, Syrian activists said on Thursday.

The Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights cited unidentified "reliable sources" as saying the Russian air force was preparing to use both the Shayrat airbase, southeast of the city of Homs, and the T4 base, to the east, to strike targets further east in the Islamic State-controlled city of Palmyra.

Russia has already launched helicopters from the T4 base, the activist group said in an online statement.

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An unidentified U.S. official said Russia appears to have been moving equipment to the Shayrat base, but declined to specify what types of equipment were being moved, Reuters reported Thursday.

Islamic State is a terrorist organization banned in Russia.

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