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Fighter Jet From Russia's Smoke-Billowing Aircraft Carrier Crashes in Mediterranean

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Kremlin Press Service

A Russian MiG-29K fighter jet crashed in the Mediterranean Sea on Monday, Nov. 14, after taking off from the Admiral Kuznetsov aircraft carrier, the Defense Ministry told the Interfax news agency.

Officials say the pilot successfully ejected from the aircraft, which began experiencing sudden equipment failure a few kilometers from the Admiral Kuznetsov, while making its landing approach.

Moscow insists that its naval forces in the area are still operating according to plans, despite the accident on Monday, and the Admiral Kuznetsov continues to launch aircraft.

The U.S. media was the first to report Russia’s loss of a MiG aircraft in the Mediterranean Sea.

Last month, Moscow sent a flotilla to join Russia's armed forces in Syria, hoping to reinforce bombings against rebel targets in the Aleppo area. Though it constitutes the Russian Navy's largest deployment since the end of the Cold War, the "publicity stunt," as some have called it, has repeatedly backfired in the foreign media.

The Kuznetsov's dramatic, billowing smoke – hardly the image of a modern aircraft carrier – has been mocked widely, and today's loss of a fighter jet will no doubt compound in the minds of many the image of a bumbling, dilapidated Russian military.

"But the lashing Kuznetsov has received in the international press misses the point," Matthew Bodner argued in a recent article for The Moscow Times. "The ship is traveling with some of Russia's heaviest hitting warships. Their arrival off the coast of Syria will represent a major upgrade to the Kremlin's available firepower in the region."

For the rest of Bodner's analysis, read: Putin's Great White Fleet: Behind Moscow's Military Messaging Failure, A Threat of Serious Force

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