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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian State TV Weekly Roundup: Mission Over in Aleppo

The Week According to Russian State Television

December 05, 2016



Read last week's installment.

After briefly covering a tragic bus crash in Siberia that killed 12 people (including 10 children), Russian television's propagandist-in-chief Dmitry Kiselyov devoted much of his Sunday *Weekly News* show to triumphant news from abroad. Syrian regime forces had scored "a major military victory" in the besieged city of Aleppo, he reported.

According to Kiselyov, the people of Aleppo had for many months been held "hostage" of the terrorist group Jabhat-al-Nusra. Rather than take credit for the victory, however, Kiselyov reminded viewers that since Oct. 18, Russian combat aircraft have not flown to Aleppo — Bashar al-Assad's army had "done it alone."

Lest anyone still doubt the Assad regime's magnanimity in victory, the audience is shown footage of civilians escaping to the government side in droves. One clip shows lines of buses which, according to Kiselyov, contain dozens of fighters who had taken advantage of the

regime's amnesty.

Kiselyov tells viewers a "very simple" future awaits Aleppo. "First, liberation of the whole city [...] and then, restoration begins," he said. "We don't expect applause from the West [... but] that's no calamity."

Russia Rules the Waves

Kiselyov might have credited Assad's forces for the victory on the ground, but in the next segment of his show, he makes clear the Russian Navy was the real star. According to Kiselyov, the naval operation in the Mediterranean Sea is the now largest in modern Russian military history.

The audience is treated to exclusive footage of Russian military might. They are shown the Kamov Ka-52K Katran, the naval variant of Russia's most advanced attack helicopter. As the Katran pounds the waters of the Mediterranean with 30mm cannon and rockets, viewers are told the craft "easily destroy boats and trucks full of terrorists." In this footage, only marine life seems threatened.

The program then turns to an update from Russia's only aircraft carrier, the much maligned Admiral Kuznetsov. Viewers are shown fighter jets taking off from the vessel's unique deck ramp.

Read About the Admiral Kuznetsov's mission to Syria.

It is a scene reminiscent of the film Top Gun, though the more observant might notice that the jets are, in fact, taking off without extra fuel tanks, bombs, or even missiles. There's a very good reason for this: due to the lack of a catapult system, the Kuznetsov's planes are unable to take off with full combat loadouts. As a report discovered, the Kuznetsov's planes only carry out combat missions from a land-based airfield.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, the program makes no mention of a recent incident involving one of the carrier's Mig-29 fighters, which crashed into the sea after running out of fuel while waiting for permission to land. This was but the first in a series of recent incidents involving the Admiral Kuznetsov. Monday, a second plane, this time a Su-33, crashed when the carrier's arresting gear failed.

Read about the latest plane crash involving the Admiral Kuznetsov.

Where the Kuznetsov doesn't quite measure up as a world-class aircraft carrier, it does much better as a floating sports club. In a clip describing life aboard, viewers are shown crewmen playing roller hockey on the deck, and having a tug-o-war on floors below. From team games, the show then switches to culinary affairs as viewers are treated to a maritime recipe of fish and dill. The whole segment is punctuated by interviews with happy crewmen.

Weekly News ends its Syria segment with a sunset scene aboard the Kuznetsov. As sailors stand and watch, a naval musician plays jazz into the night. The message is clear: in spite of all the flaws, life is good aboard Russia's only aircraft carrier. ⊠⊠⊠⊠⊠

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