

Russian-Backed Crimea to Boost Trade, Transport Ties With Syria

By [Reuters](#)

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Bashar al-Assad / Kremlin.ru

Syrian President Bashar al-Assad has tentative plans to visit Russian-backed Crimea in April 2019 and is in talks about starting regular passenger flights between Syria and the Black Sea peninsula, Russian news agencies said on Tuesday.

Crimea has been under Western sanctions since it was annexed from Ukraine by Russia in 2014. Syria is also subject to European Union and U.S. sanctions.

The Russian agencies cited members of a Crimean delegation visiting Syria this week, which includes the Moscow-backed prime minister of Crimea Sergei Aksyonov.

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Syrian state news agency SANA said Syrian and Crimean officials had agreed to create a Syrian

Trading House in Crimea and a joint maritime transport company. They also agreed to facilitate financial and banking measures.

"Crimea is the nearest Black Sea port and therefore can play an important role in the bilateral trade between Syria and Crimea, and between Syria, Crimea and Russia," SANA reported, quoting a statement by Syrian Economy Minister Samer Khalil.

Russia is an ally of Assad in Syria's seven-year long conflict. The leaders of two other Russian-backed breakaway regions, Georgia's South Ossetia and Abkhazia, also visited Damascus this year.

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