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Russia Sends New Frigate With Cruise Missiles to Mediterranean

By Reuters

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Russia said it deployed its new frigate with long-range Kalibr cruise missiles to the Mediterranean Sea on Monday, a few months after Moscow had reinforced its naval forces off Syrian coast.

"The Black Sea Navy Fleet's frigate Admiral Makarov left [Navy base] Sevastopol and laid a course for the Black Sea straits. The vessel will be acting in the standing naval force of the Russian fleet in the Mediterranean," the Russian Defense Ministry said in statement.

Russia has in the past fired Kalibr cruise missiles from frigates and submarines stationed in the Mediterranean Sea at militant targets to support Syrian army offensives.

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The ministry did not say whether the frigate was supposed to take part in the military operation in Syria where Moscow has backed President Bashar Assad since entering the war in 2015.

President Vladimir Putin said in May that Russian military vessels with Kalibr cruise missiles would be on permanent standby in the Mediterranean to counter what he said was the terrorist threat in Syria.

Russia deployed several warships to the Mediterranean this summer, including the Admiral Grigorovich, Admiral Essen and Pytlivy frigates, along with landing ship Nikolai Filchenkov and the Vishny Volochek missile corvette.

The Izvestia newspaper said in August that Russia had gathered its largest naval group in the Mediterranean Sea since 2015, including 10 vessels, most of them armed with long-range Kalibr cruise missiles. More vessels were on the way, the newspaper said, and two submarines had also been deployed.

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