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U.S. Envoy Warns Russia With 'Warship Diplomacy'

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The U.S. Navy aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln (CVN-72) **Wikicommons**

U.S. Ambassador to Russia Jon Huntsman has boarded one of two U.S. Navy aircraft carriers that arrived in the Mediterranean on Tuesday to caution Moscow against its activities in Syria and around the world.

The U.S. and other Western countries have accused Russia of a range of bad behavior, including aggression in Ukraine, involvement in Syria's civil war and the dispatching of military advisers to Venezuela, as well as attempts to influence elections. Late last week, Syrian President Bashar al-Assad met senior Russian officials in Damascus with reports coming out that the sides would soon sign a deal expanding Russia's naval presence in the port of Tartus until 2092.

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The U.S. Navy said Huntsman observed the operations of 9,000 sailors and marines, 130

aircraft and 10 ships aboard the USS Abraham Lincoln. He said the Nimitz-class USS Abraham Lincoln and the John C. Stennis each "represent 100,000 tons of international diplomacy."

"When you have 200,000 tons of diplomacy that is cruising in the Mediterranean," Huntsman told CNN, "this is forward-operating diplomacy — nothing else need to be said."

The U.S. Navy says the carrier strike group is being deployed in the Mediterranean Sea for the first time since 2016. Russia sent its only aircraft carrier, the Admiral Kuznetsov, to assist in airstrikes in Syria in 2017.

On Tuesday, Huntsman touted the warships as "strong defense" that will complement diplomatic dialogue in calling on Russia to "cease its destabilizing activities around the world."

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