

Russian Helicopters Land in Abandoned U.S. Base in Syria

October 22, 2019



syria.mil.ru

Three Russian military helicopters have landed in the Tabqa military airfield in Syria that the United States abandoned earlier this month, Russian state media reported Tuesday.

Syrian government forces took control of the airfield last week when U.S.-led coalition forces left the base as part of the U.S. withdrawal of troops from northern Syria. The airfield had been captured in 2017 by U.S.-backed Kurdish forces from the Islamic State terrorist group.

Two Russian Mi-8 military transport helicopters and a Mi-35 helicopter gunship have landed in the Tabqa airport, according to footage [published](#) by Russia's Defense Ministry-run Zvezda television channel.

Embed:

The highly damaged airfield has opened for the first time in six years in what the channel

called a "historic moment."

"The Tabqa airport is a strategically located air corridor that links the key northern Syrian cities of Aleppo, Deir ez-Zor and Raqqa," Zvezda [reported](#).

"It takes no more than an hour to fly to any of these cities from the opened airfield, provided, of course, that the runway will be restored," it said.

Tabqa is the latest U.S.-held position now controlled by Russian-backed Syrian or Russian forces.

Last week a Pentagon official said the U.S. had "[handed over](#)" the northern city of Manbij to Russia as Russian military police began patrolling the area.

With Russia's increasing influence in the region, President Vladimir Putin is set to host Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Reports suggest that the two leaders could discuss a phased Kurdish withdrawal from a border area in northern Syria as part of a U.S.-brokered agreement.

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2019/10/22/russian-helicopters-land-abandoned-us-base-syria-a67849>