

Russia, Syria Hold First Joint Naval Drills

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More than 2,000 Russian and Syrian troops and around 10 vessels and boats took part in the drills. **Lev Fedoseyev / TASS**

Russia and Syria have held their first joint naval drills near Russia's naval facility in the eastern Mediterranean, the Russian Defense Ministry's Zvezda news channel [reported](#) Tuesday.

Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015, four years after Moscow's Middle East ally was thrown into civil war. Russia has maintained the Tartus military facility since 1971 and recently [moved to expand](#) its foothold there until 2092.

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More than 2,000 Russian and Syrian troops and around 10 vessels and boats took part in the drills at Tartus, Zvezda reported. Russian aircraft were also present.

They repelled a drone attack, an attack on a checkpoint and an attack by “scuba diving saboteurs,” according to the report and video footage.

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The Russian and Syrian navies’ tactical groups performed artillery fire and conducted joint maneuvering at sea, Rear Adm. Alexander Yuldashev was [quoted](#) by Interfax as saying.

“On shore, the security and defense units will combat unmanned aerial vehicles [and] illegal armed groups,” Yuldashev added.

Russia also maintains an air base in Syria, which it [plans to lease](#) from Damascus until at least 2066.

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