The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russian, Syrian Troops Hold Joint Drills

January 22, 2020



Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015 as Moscow's Middle East ally grappled with a years-long civil war. **Screenshot Defense Ministry**

Russia and Syria have conducted joint exercises aimed at protecting economic interests in Moscow's key naval foothold in the Mediterranean, the Defense Ministry's Zvezda news channel reported.

These are at least the second joint Russian-Syrian naval drills to take place in the port of Tartus in a month. Russia seeks to invest $500 million in Tartus over the next four years, with plans to build a grain hub and infrastructure construction expected to begin this year.

Related article: 5 Russian-Syrian Projects Announced This Week

During the exercises, around 2,000 troops, 10 vessels and 30 pieces of equipment repelled simulated underwater and on-land attacks, Zvezda reported.

Pantsir-S short-range air defense systems protected coastal airspace, it quoted the Defense Ministry as saying.

“A business’ activity directly depends on how security is organized, how protection is provided against various threats and how to respond to these situations,” said Mikhail Yalbychev, head of Tartus’ management department.

The joint exercises took place over the course of Saturday, Sunday and Monday, the state-run TASS news agency reported.

Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015 as Moscow's Middle East ally grappled with a years-long civil war. Russia has maintained the Tartus military facility since 1971 and recently moved to expand its foothold there through 2092.

On Tuesday, Russian-led air strikes killed at least 40 people in northwest Syria in a major army assault backed by Iranian militias to clear out rebels that has sent tens of thousands of people fleeing toward the border with Turkey, residents and rescuers said.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/01/22/russian-syrian-troops-hold-joint-drills-a68994