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INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Sends 4th Warship to Syria Amid Turkey Tensions

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The large landing ship Novocherkassk was photographed crossing Turkey's busy Bosphorus strait days after Russia sent two warships equipped with Kalibr cruise missiles toward the Syrian coast. **Pixabay**

The Russian Navy has dispatched a fourth warship to Syria's Mediterranean coast as tensions over the northwestern province of Idlib spiral with Turkey, amateur ship spotters reported Monday.

The large landing ship Novocherkassk was photographed crossing Turkey's busy Bosphorus strait days after Russia sent two warships equipped with Kalibr cruise missiles toward the Syrian coast. A third frigate has been in the Mediterranean since December.

Embed:

> A final Syrian showdown looms: Heavily laden #ВМФ Project 775 #RussianNavy #ЧФ Black Sea Fleet 197th Landing Ship Brigade's Ropucha class LSTM (tank

> carrying landing ship) Novocherkassk 142 transits Bosphorus towards Mediterranean en route to #Tartus #Syria. 14:00Z pic.twitter.com/7ZzLkH23IR
>
> — Yörük Işık (@YorukIsik) March 2, 2020

Turkey and Russia have come closer than ever to direct military confrontation in Syria in recent days.

Ankara launched a military campaign last week in Idlib against the Russian-backed Syrian government forces intent on retaking the rebel stronghold. Turkey said Syrian government airstrikes killed 33 Turkish soldiers Thursday, bringing the death toll in Idlib to 54 Turkish soldiers in February.

Turkish forces responded to the strikes by shooting down two Syrian government warplanes and striking a military airport. Turkey's defense ministry said Tuesday that it shot down another Syrian warplane.

Presidents Vladimir Putin and Recep Tayyip Erdogan are due to meet this Thursday in an effort to diffuse tensions.

Russia and Syria have carried out a number of naval drills in the port of Tartus in recent months. Russia has maintained the Tartus military facility since 1971 and recently moved to expand its foothold there through 2092.

Russia has waged an air and sea campaign in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad since 2015 as its ally has grappled with a nine-year civil war.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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