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Top Myanmar Military Delegation to Visit Moscow – Embassy

Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Air Force Maung Maung Kyaw will lead the group as ties between the two countries strengthen.

By Pjotr Sauer

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Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. **AP/TASS**

A military delegation led by Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar Air Force Maung Maung Kyaw will visit Moscow on Thursday, a representative of the Myanmar Embassy told The Moscow Times.

The representative said that as part of the visit the delegation planned to attend the HeliRussia exhibition, Russia's largest helicopter exhibition that will run in Moscow from May 20-22. Russia's state arms seller Rosoboronexport on Wednesday said it planned to showcase its latest Ka-52 and Mi-28NE combat helicopters at the exhibition in the Crocus Center in the capital.

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A HeliRussia representative confirmed that Myanmar is "one of over 50 countries" expected at the conference, but declined to say whether or not the military delegation would attend.

The Russian Defense Ministry has not publicly announced any meetings with its Myanmar counterparts. Myanmar's military attache in Moscow also confirmed Maung Maung Kyaw's visit in an email, saying that the air force chief will be on a "tight schedule."

The Irrawaddy news service on Wednesday reported that formerly U.S.-sanctioned Myanmar tycoon U Tay Za would also be part of the delegation. The Moscow Times was unable to independently confirm this.

Russia has continued to support the Myanmar regime after a military coup ousted Aung San Suu Kyi brought to an end to a decade of civilian rule and led to mass anti-junta protests. In March, Russia's Deputy Defense Secretary Alexander Fomin visited Myanmar in the first high-profile visit to the country by a foreign official after the coup.

While overall trade between Russia and Myanmar remains minimal, Russia and Myanmar have recently deepened their military cooperation and Russia is now the number two military exporter to Myanmar behind China.

In January of this year, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu agreed to supply Myanmar with Pantsir-S1 surface-to-air missile systems, Orlan-10E surveillance drones and radar equipment during a visit to the capital Naypyidaw in January. According to customs data seen by The Moscow Times, the Myanmar military regime imported $14.7 million in radar equipment in February of this year.

In mid-April, the Myanmar military acknowledged the death of 248 anti-government protesters, saying they were killed after they initiated violence. Human rights advocates in Myanmar say that over 800 protesters have been killed by the junta.

Observers have said Myanmar used Russian-made planes and helicopters to bomb anti-government protests and rebels.

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