

Russia Packs Up Military Equipment at Syrian Base – Satellite Photos

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An aerial view of Russia's Khmeimim airbase. **Maxar**

Russia appears to be packing up military equipment at its airbase in Syria, satellite images released by Maxar on Friday [showed](#).

The fate of Moscow's military presence in Syria, a key foothold for its presence in the Middle East and Africa, has been unclear since Russian-backed President Bashar al-Assad's regime was overthrown by Islamist rebel forces, forcing him to flee to Moscow.

Maxar imagery shows two An-124 heavy transport aircraft at Russia's Khmeimim airfield with their nose cones opened to load heavy equipment as well as helicopters being dismantled and readied for transport.

Russian S-400 air defense systems have also been moved from their previous deployment site at the airbase.

The Russian Navy base at Tartus has remained largely unchanged since Wednesday, the

images showed.

"While tactical aviation is still there, [Russia] appears to be consolidating at Khmeimim and Tartus. In short, a withdrawal is under way," Michael Kofman, a senior fellow at the Carnegie Endowment, wrote on X.

"Still unclear if this is a complete exit. There are indications and rumors to that effect, but best to wait for the evidence," he said.

Russian diplomats [told](#) The Moscow Times this week that a complete Russian withdrawal from Syria, including the Tartus naval base and the Khmeimim airbase, was likely.

Related article: [Exclusive: Russia, Reeling from Syrian Regime's Collapse, Bets on Chaos to Preserve Its Foothold](#)

On Sunday, as anti-Assad forces captured the territories where Tartus and Khmeimim are located, Russia's Foreign Ministry said that it was in contact with the insurgents and had received security guarantees.

Russia was continuing to discuss the fate of its military infrastructure in the country with Syria's new leadership, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

"We are in contact with those who control the situation in Syria. This is necessary since our [military] base and diplomatic mission are there," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

The Tartus naval base and Khmeimim air base in Syria are Russia's only military outposts outside the former Soviet Union and have been key to the Kremlin's activities in Africa and the Middle East.

Russia's 2015 intervention turned the tide of the Syrian civil war and is widely credited with saving Assad's regime as it fought a myriad group of rebel forces.

But with Moscow bogged down with its military offensive on Ukraine, some analysts say it did not have the resources or energy to come to his rescue again.

"The special military operation is the absolute priority for our country," Peskov said Thursday, using Moscow's preferred language for the offensive.

"All the objectives of the special military operation will be achieved," he added.

AFP contributed reporting.

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