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Russia Sends Warships toward Syria

By John Glaser

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Russia has [dispatched eleven warships](#) to the eastern Mediterranean, some of which will dock in Syria, in Moscow's latest attempt to display Russian power in the region and ward off a Western intervention in Syria.



About half of the ships are capable of carrying hundreds of Russian Marines, although its unknown if any forces are set to go ashore after docking at Russia's naval base in Tartus.

The announcement came just one day after Russia officially said it would halt all new weapons sales to Syria. Russia has provide arms and backing to the regime of Bashar al-Assad throughout the 16-month long conflict.

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Sending naval vessels, as Russia has done periodically throughout the past, seems an attempt to reassure the US and its allies that Moscow still plans to block any attempt to intervene militarily against the Assad regime.

Russia's main concerns regarding Syria is that Washington will try to usher in regime change, and possibly [military intervention](#), and exploit any political transition for their benefit, thus stamping out Russia's valuable Middle Eastern ally.

UN envoy Kofi Annan [said this month](#) that while Russia has received a lot of criticism for continuing to back the violent President Bashar al-Assad's regime, "very few things are said about other countries that send arms and money and weigh on the situation on the ground," without naming any specific countries.

[Foreign meddling](#) on behalf of all sides has been instrumental in [prolonging the conflict by emboldening both sides](#) and making a political settlement more remote. But now Russia seems to be altering its posture to one of preventing any military intervention against Assad, instead of arming the regime as a proxy client. This position is more amenable to a resolution to the conflict, unlike the position of the US and its allies in [arming and aiding the Syrian rebel fighters](#).