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Russia sends four more warships to Mediterranean Sea near Syria

2/19/2013



A flotilla of four Russian warships is heading to the Mediterranean Sea near the Syrian waters, Russian Defense Ministry says.

The ministry said in a statement to Russian media on Tuesday that the four warships will join an escort ship and smaller vessels, which are currently on duty in the area.

Russia's Ria Novosti news agency quoted a military source as saying that the main task of the deployed ships could be participating in a possible evacuation of Russian nationals from Syria.

"Even though the tasks of the warships has not been announced, it can be assumed that given the development of the situation in the region their main job will be taking part in a possible evacuation of Russian citizens from Syria," the source said, according to the Russian news agency.

Also on Tuesday, Russian Emergencies Ministry said it sent two planes to the Syrian port city of Latakia to transfer 46 tons of humanitarian aid for civilians in the Arab country.

A ministry spokesman also said the planes would evacuate any Russians wanting to return to Russia on the flight back.

Russia also deployed five landing ships, carrying military vehicles and hundreds of marines, as well as combat vessels in the eastern Mediterranean in January.

The diplomatic sources said at the time that the ships were deployed to participate in a naval drill and to deter any military intervention by the Western states in Syria.

In December, Russia also sent warships carrying a marines unit to Syria's Mediterranean port of Tartus, where Moscow has a naval base.