



Turkey sharply escalated Russian-NATO relations on November 24 by downing a Russian Su-24 bomber near the Turkish-Syrian border. Turkey reported that the Russian bomber had violated Turkish airspace and ignored repeated warnings before Turkish F-16s shot the aircraft down. Syrian rebels killed one Russian pilot, and a subsequent search-and-rescue mission in northern Syria resulted in the death of a Russian marine and the destruction of a Russian helicopter. Russia is likely to take escalatory measures to project force against NATO's southern flank in response to Turkey's actions. Russia has already announced the deployment of its most advanced S-400 air defense system to the Russian airbase in Latakia and the resumption of fighter jet escorts of its bombers, a practice reportedly halted in the wake of an October 20 memorandum of understanding with the U.S. Russia also announced that its flagship missile cruiser near the Syrian coast would "destroy" any aircraft threatening posing a threat to its warplanes. The first downing of a Russian plane by a NATO member since the Korean War represents a direct challenge to the great power image President Putin seeks to cultivate and is likely to accelerate Russia's intervention in the region.

The expansion of Russian military activity in the region underscores Russia's primary grand strategic objective, to assert itself as a great power rival to the U.S. and a direct rival to NATO. Russia's escalation, which increased sharply after the ISIS attacks in Paris on November 13, accelerated further with the transit of long-range strategic bombers around Western Europe's coast and the launch of cruise missiles from the Caspian Sea on November 20. This escalation signaled Russia's intent to challenge Western states while it claims to conduct counter-terrorism operations. The U.K. scrambled jets as Russian long-range bombers passed near its airspace and has reportedly been conducting joint search operations with Canada and France for a Russian submarine, though it is unclear that the submarine is destined for Syria. Russian long-range bombers and cruise missiles from the Caspian disrupted air traffic in Iraq, including U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition flights out of Iraqi Kurdistan. Russia also disrupted air traffic into and out of Lebanon over the Mediterranean.

As Russia projects aggression against its opponents, it continues to pursue deeper ties with its new regional partners, namely Iran and Egypt. Russia loosened a ban on the export of nuclear equipment and technology to Iran and signed an agreement to help build Egypt's first nuclear power plant. Russian President Vladimir Putin travelled to Iran for the first time since 2007 to meet with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who called for "closer interaction" with Russia to counter the U.S. in the Middle East. Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu later met with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Cairo, where he said Russia was ready to "closely cooperate" against ISIS's affiliate in the Sinai Peninsula. Russia's efforts to expand its partnerships with Iran and Egypt are a key component of its intervention in the Middle East which aims to project Russian military power at the expense of U.S. influence in the region. Russia views France as both a potential partner and rival to its military intervention. France confirmed that its newly deployed Charles de Gaulle aircraft carrier began deconflicting operations with Russian naval assets near the Syrian coast. Russia seeks to draw France and some U.S. regional partners into its proposed alternative counter-terrorism alliance without sacrificing its freedom of action in Syria. French President Francois Hollande signaled that he would be unwilling to partner with Russia if Russia continues to strike non-terrorist targets on behalf of the Syrian regime ahead of his meeting with Vladimir Putin on November 26.

1 Turkey. 19 NOV: Turkish Foreign Minister Feridun Sinirlioglu warned the Russian ambassador in Istanbul of "serious consequences" if Russian planes continued to target Turkmen villages in northern Syria.

24 NOV: Turkish F-16 jets downed a Russian Su-24 bomber near the Turkish-Syrian border after it reportedly violated Turkish airspace and ignored repeated warnings by the Turkish Air Force. Rebel forces in Syria killed one of the pilots as he parachuted from the aircraft while Russian and Syrian special forces reportedly rescued the second.

24 NOV: Russian President Vladimir Putin described Turkey's downing of the Su-24 as a "stab in the back" and pledged "serious consequences" for bilateral relations.

24 NOV: Russia's Ministry of Defense suspended military communications with Turkey.

24 NOV: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov warned Russian tourists against travelling to Turkey over security concerns and cancelled his own November 25 visit to meet the Turkish foreign minister in Istanbul.

2 Syria. 18-23 NOV: Russia's MoD claimed Russian warplanes conducted strikes against targets in Aleppo, Damascus, Idlib, Latakia, Hama, Homs, ar-Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zour provinces.

19-20 NOV: Russian long-range strategic bombers flew from northern Russia around the British Isles and through the Strait of Gibraltar before firing cruise missiles at targets in Syria from a position over the Mediterranean Sea.

20 NOV: Russian ships in the Caspian Sea fired 18 cruise missiles at targets in ar-Raqqa, Aleppo, and Idlib provinces, according to the Russian MoD.

20 NOV: Russian President Vladimir Putin said Russia's military campaign in Syria is currently "not enough" and said that he hoped "subsequent phases" of the campaign would "bring the expected results."

24 NOV: Syrian rebels destroyed a Russian transport helicopter and killed a Russian marine in northern Latakia Province after anti-aircraft fire forced the helicopter to make an emergency landing. The helicopter was conducting a search-and-rescue operation for the pilots of the Su-24 downed by Turkey. The remaining helicopter crew members were evacuated.

24 NOV: The Russian MoD stated that Russian fighter jets would again escort all Russian bombers conducting airstrikes in Syria following Turkey's downing of a Russian warplane, a practice reportedly halted following an October 20 air safety memorandum of understanding with the U.S. The Russian MoD asserted that the Moskva guided missile cruiser off the coast of Latakia Province would "destroy" any targets posing "potential danger" to its forces in Syria.

25 NOV: Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu announced that Russia would deploy its advanced S-400 surface-to-air missile system to the Russian airbase in Latakia Province.

3 Central Military District. 18-19 NOV: The Russian military conducted its first reported nighttime exercise of the mobile Iskander-M short-range ballistic missile system in Orenburg Oblast.

4 France. 19 NOV: Russian military chief of staff Gen. Valery Gerasimov held a phone call with his French counterpart to discuss cooperation between Russian naval assets and the Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier near Syria, according to the Russian MoD.

24 NOV: French President Francois Hollande confirmed that France had begun deconflicting with Russian naval assets since the Charles De Gaulle aircraft carrier arrived in the eastern Mediterranean on November 22. Hollande stated that he would ask Putin to target ISIS and other terrorist groups in Syria during his upcoming visit to Moscow.

5 UK. 19 NOV: The UK scrambled Typhoon fighter jets to intercept and escort two Russian Tu-160 strategic bombers, likely on their way to launch strikes in Syria, as they passed near British airspace.

22 NOV: The UK revealed it was searching for a Russian submarine detected off the coast of Scotland for at least 10 days prior with the assistance of French and Canadian aircraft.

6 Egypt. 19 NOV: Russia and Egypt signed an agreement to build Egypt's first ever nuclear power plant, the two countries' largest joint project in 45 years.

24 NOV: Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu said Russia was "prepared to closely cooperate" to combat ISIS's affiliate in the Sinai Peninsula after a meeting with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi in Cairo.

7 Ukraine. 19-24 NOV: Russian-backed separatists continued to launch indirect and direct fire attacks against Ukrainian positions across the front line in the southeastern Donbas region, with heavy concentration around the separatist stronghold of Donetsk City.

22-23 NOV: Russia reportedly deployed Grad MLRS, tanks, and additional paratroopers to the de-facto border between Crimea and Ukraine in response to the destruction of electricity pylons in southern Ukraine, which left the Russian-occupied peninsula without power.

8 China. 20 NOV: China became the first foreign government to purchase the advanced Russian Sukhoi Su-35, signing a \$2 billion-dollar contract with Russia for 24 fighter jets.

9 Iran. 20 NOV: Iranian F-14 Tomcats were recorded escorting Russian Tu-95 strategic bombers through Iranian airspace before and after conducting airstrikes in Syria.

23 NOV: President Putin met with Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during his first visit to Iran since 2007. The Kremlin released a statement saying that Russia and Iran will oppose "external attempts" at regime change in Syria.

23 NOV: President Putin issued a decree ending a ban on provisions of nuclear equipment and technology to Iran and pledging to develop Iranian nuclear facilities.

10 Lebanon. 21 NOV: Flights to and from Lebanon were delayed, cancelled and rerouted after Russia reportedly demanded Beirut redirect air traffic away from a Russian naval exercise in the eastern Mediterranean.

11 North Caucasus. 22 NOV: A Russian security operation killed 14 militants allegedly linked to ISIS in the North Caucasus region of Kabardino-Balkaria.

12 Iraq. 23 NOV: Iraq suspended commercial flights to and from Erbil and Sulaymaniyah in Iraqi Kurdistan due to threat of Russian cruise missiles and long-range bomber flights from the Caspian Sea directed toward Syria. The U.S.-led anti-ISIS coalition also suspended reconnaissance and resupply flights from Erbil.

13 Caspian Sea. 23 NOV: President of Turkmenistan Gurbanguly Berdimukhamedov told Russian President Vladimir Putin that Kazakhstan was "concerned" by Russia's use of airspace over the Caspian Sea to launch strikes against targets in Syria.

14 Red Sea. 23 NOV: The Russian destroyer Vice-Admiral Kulakov conducted a counterterrorism exercise in the Red Sea involving an anti-submarine helicopter. The destroyer took part in a counterterrorism exercise in the Mediterranean before passing through Suez Canal around November 20.

15 Jordan. 24 NOV: President Putin said Russia and Jordan "should join forces" in the "fight against international terrorism" in a meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II in Sochi.