



President Vladimir Putin seeks to project Russian military force forward into the territory of the former Soviet Union while competing with the U.S. for influence in the Middle East. Putin is expected to reach an agreement to create joint border patrol groups to manage crises along the borders of former Soviet republics including Tajikistan during a regional summit in Kazakhstan. Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said Moscow was “ready” to open new information coordination centers in the Middle East and North Africa in addition to the cell in Baghdad, which is reportedly already providing intelligence for Iraqi airstrikes against ISIS. Lavrov also said this week that Russia would bolster Afghan security forces in order to prevent what it cast as an ISIS-led insurgency in Afghanistan from spreading into Central Asia. He later revealed that President Putin would consider a potential request by Kabul to help combat ISIS. Afghanistan comprises the nexus of two of Putin’s objectives: to counter the U.S. and NATO; and to expand Russia’s military presence on the fringes of the former Soviet Union. While it remains unlikely that Putin would seriously involve Russia in a counterinsurgency in Afghanistan, it is clear that Putin sees instability in Afghanistan as an opportunity to advance his objectives vis-à-vis the West. Meanwhile, Russia’s air campaign in Syria has escalated, increasing pressure upon the U.S. and its allies to accept Russian leadership of a new anti-ISIS coalition, to challenge Russia, or to withdraw.

1) **Syria.** 09-14 OCT: Russia reported an increased number of daily Russian aircraft sorties in Syria from 20 sorties on October 8 to 88 sorties on October 13, primarily targeting areas under the control of groups other than ISIS.

10, 14 OCT: U.S. and Russian military officials held video conferences to discuss ways to deconflict air operations in Syria.

10 OCT: Russian and U.S. combat aircraft came within visual range of one another on two occasions.

10 OCT: Human Rights Watch reported that an advanced type of Russian cluster bomb was used in an airstrike southwest of the city of Aleppo for the first time in the Syrian conflict on October 4.

2) **Iraq.** 13 OCT: The chairman of Iraq’s parliamentary security and defense committee Hakim al-Zamili said the new Russian-Iranian-Syrian-Iraqi information coordination center had provided intelligence for Iraqi airstrikes against ISIS over the past week.

12 OCT: A delegation from Russia’s Federal Service for Military-Technical Cooperation met with Iraqi Defense Minister Khalid al-Obeidi to discuss “armament contracts and training arrangements.”

3) **Moscow.** 11 OCT: Russian authorities arrested 12 alleged ISIS-affiliated terrorists who they claimed were preparing an IED attack on public transportation in Moscow.

4) **Middle East and North Africa.** 12 OCT: Foreign minister Lavrov said in a Moscow press conference that Russia was “ready” to establish new information coordination centers in the Middle East and North Africa to support its operations in Syria.

5) **Saudi Arabia.** 11 OCT: Russian President Vladimir Putin met with Saudi defense minister Mohammed bin Salman in Sochi, Russia to ease Riyadh’s concerns over Russian intervention in Syria.

6) **North Caucasus.** 10, 12 OCT: Russian Federal Security Service (FSB) forces killed six militants in the North Caucasus near the villages of Gimry, Dagestan and Gazi-Yurt, Ingushetia.

7) **Crimea.** 09 OCT: 500 Russian paratroopers landed in Opuk Cape, a regular training site of Russia’s 810th Naval Infantry Brigade, which is assessed to be participating in operations in Syria. This event may indicate further Russian troop deployments to Syria.

8) **Kazakhstan.** 14 OCT: President Putin arrived in the Kazakh capital of Astana where he is expected to agree to a deal to form joint border patrol groups with former Soviet republics during an October 16 summit of the Russia-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). Recently reelected Belarusian President Alyaksandr Lukashenka is expected to discuss the proposed Russian air base in Belarus with Putin on the sidelines of the summit.

9) **Uzbekistan.** 08 OCT: Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan agreed to increase security cooperation along their borders with Afghanistan. Both are involved in the Russian-led Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), which is set to convene at a summit on October 16.

10) **Afghanistan.** 13-14 OCT: Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said Russia would help bolster the capabilities of Afghan security forces because of the threat of ISIS-affiliated fighters expanding into Central Asia. Lavrov said that Russian President Vladimir Putin would consider potential requests by Afghanistan and Iraq to combat ISIS.

12 OCT: Deputy head of the counterterrorism body of the Russia and China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) Vitaly Burov announced that the SCO would expand cooperation with Afghan intelligence to help combat ISIS in Afghanistan, an observer state of the group.

08 OCT: Chief-of-Staff of the Russian military Valery Gerasimov called for closer security collaboration between Russia, Afghanistan, and Central Asian governments at a forum in Moscow in order to prevent Afghanistan’s escalating insurgency from spreading beyond its borders.

11) **China.** 14 OCT: The Russia and China-led Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) launched the “Xiamen-2015” joint command post exercise in China focusing on countering terrorist activity on the internet.