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Russian President Vladimir Putin indicated on November 10 that Russia was developing nuclear-capable strike systems that could penetrate NATO’s planned missile defense shield in Europe. Russian-backed separatists reignited hostilities on the front line in eastern Ukraine after a two-month operational pause that coincided with Russia’s deployments to Syria. Russia may be escalating operations in response to a November 4 EU leadership statement indicating that Europe may extend sanctions beyond January 2016. The EU statement indicated that Russia’s continued refusal to support the ceasefire agreement in Ukraine would trigger the extension of sanctions regardless of Russia’s attempts to position itself as a necessary partner in the fight against ISIS. Meanwhile, Russia reportedly finalized a long-stalled contract to supply Iran with advanced S-300 missile defense systems that could be delivered by 2017. Previous unfulfilled promises to provide the air defense system raise doubts over the veracity of new Russian statements. Russia continues to pursue stronger security ties with U.S. partners in order to strengthen its alternative regional counterterrorism alliance. President Vladimir Putin and the Emir of Kuwait agreed to enhance military-technical ties, while Putin’s envoy to Afghanistan announced preparations to sell Hind attack helicopters and small arms to Kabul. Russia’s parliamentary speaker, a member of Putin’s inner circle, visited Algeria and Tunisia to discuss counterterrorism efforts, reinforcing previous indicators that the Kremlin includes North Africa in the scope of its regional intervention. It remains unclear whether the possible bombing of a Russian airliner over the Sinai Peninsula and Putin’s subsequent flight ban to Egypt will create tension or accelerate Moscow’s efforts to incorporate Egypt into its regional axis.

1) **Syria.** 04-10 NOV: Russia claimed to have conducted airstrikes in Aleppo, Damascus, Deir ez-Zour, Latakia, ar-Raqqah, Hama and Homs provinces.

04 NOV: Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov met with the UN envoy to Syria in Moscow and called for the international community to agree upon a list of acceptable Syrian opposition groups to participate in a potential peace dialogue.

04 NOV: Unnamed U.S. security officials reported Russia’s military presence in Syria doubled to 4,000 personnel since the Russian air campaign began on 30 SEP.

05 NOV: The head of Russia’s Aerospace Forces Col. Gen. Viktor Bondarev confirmed that Russia deployed surface-to-air missile systems to protect its air assets in Syria and to form an integrated air defense system around Bassel al-Assad airport.

10 NOV: Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Mikhail Bogdanov met with a Syrian political opposition delegation in Moscow, where they discussed a potential dialogue between the Syrian government and “a broad spectrum of the Syrian opposition.”

2) **North Africa.** 04-05 NOV: Russian parliamentary speaker Sergey Naryshkin met with the Algerian President Abdelaziz Bouteflika and Tunisian speaker of parliament Mohammed al- Nasser. in Algiers and Tunis respectively, focusing on the conflict in Syria and counterterrorism efforts throughout the region.

3) **Ukraine.** 05 NOV. Separatists from the Russian-backed “Donetsk People’s Republic” (DNR) claimed to have completed the withdrawal of light artillery and tanks from the front line, the main focus of bilateral de-escalation efforts since a renewed ceasefire took effect on September 1.

06 NOV: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov met in Berlin with his German, French, and Ukrainian counterparts. He called for the deadlines for the implementation of the political and military components of the February “Minsk II” ceasefire agreement to be postponed into 2016.

07-10 NOV: Russian-backed separatists launched attacks across the front line in the southeastern Donetsk and Luhansk Oblasts region after a two-month operational pause. Separatists reportedly attempted to storm Ukrainian positions north of the DNR stronghold of Horlivka in addition to launching direct and indirect fire attacks in other key areas, including east of the key port city of Mariupol.

4) **Egypt.** 06 NOV: President Vladimir Putin suspended commercial air traffic between Russia and Egypt based on the recommendation of Russia’s National Anti-Terrorism Committee. The decision came amid Western reports that an affiliate of ISIS detonated a bomb on Metrojet Flight 9268, which crashed in the Sinai Peninsula on October 31.

5) **Yemen.** 05 NOV: Russia delivered aid for the first time since July to the Yemeni capital of Sana’a, controlled by Iranian-backed al-Houthi rebels. The spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition in Yemen said that Russia received permission to break the coalition’s no-fly zone.

06 NOV: Russian Deputy Defense Minister Anatoly Antonov met with the UN’s humanitarian chief in Moscow to discuss the conflicts in Syria and Yemen and potential cooperation to ensure the security of UN humanitarian convoys.

6) **Pacific.** 09 NOV: Deputy chief-of-staff of the Russian military General Nikolay Bogdanovsky traveled to Pyongyang to meet with North Korean military officials, according to North Korean state media and an anonymous Russian source cited by Russian state media. Russian state media indicated that the sides may agree a defense agreement to prevent “dangerous military activity” and to peacefully resolve possible conflicts between the countries.

10 NOV: Russian Deputy Defense Minister Ruslan Tsalikov called for the accelerated construction of military infrastructure on the southern Kuril Islands, which are claimed by Japan.

7) **Iran.** 09 NOV: Russia and Iran reportedly finalized a contract on the delivery of S-300 surface-to-air missile systems to Iran, according to the head of Russian state defense conglomerate Rostec. Iran could reportedly receive four upgraded S-300 systems by mid-2017. Russia agreed to provide S-300 systems to Iran in 2007 but stalled and later froze the deal in 2011. It remains unclear whether Russia will now execute the delivery.

8) **Afghanistan.** 09 NOV: President Vladimir Putin’s envoy to Afghanistan said that Russia is preparing to send three Hind attack helicopters and 10,000 Kalashnikovs to Kabul. The envoy dismissed the possibility of an operation similar to Russia’s intervention in Syria.

9) **Kuwait.** 10 NOV: President Vladimir and Emir of Kuwait Sabah al-Ahmad al-Saber al-Sabah held their first official meeting in Sochi. Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said that Russia and Kuwait would increase bilateral communications over terrorist threats. Russian state arms exporter “Rosoboronexport” signed a memorandum pledging to increasing technical cooperation with the Kuwaiti Defense Ministry.

10) **Russia.** 10 NOV: Russian President Vladimir Putin said that Russia was developing “strike systems capable of penetrating any missile defense system” in response to NATO’s missile defense program in Europe, which he said aimed to “neutralize” Russia’s nuclear arsenal.