



Russia continues to leverage its military intervention in Syria to assert its great power status in the Middle East. Following inconclusive multi-lateral talks in Vienna on October 30, Russia claimed to have conducted airstrikes in direct coordination with the Syrian opposition in order to present itself as a cooperative actor, and possibly to sow distrust among rebel groups. Russia strengthened its military partnership with Iran by closing in on an agreement over a previously-stalled contract to provide S-300 anti-aircraft systems to Tehran. Russia activated its air de-confliction agreements with Israel and the US, carrying out a short range communications test with a U.S. fighter plane on November 3. Russia also responded on November 3 to an attack by ISIS south of Homs city by sending attack helicopters to a forward airbase near the ISIS front line. Preserving the Syrian regime may require Russia to engage on the central Syrian front against ISIS while maintaining its current support to regime offensives against rebels and Jabhat al-Nusra in Syria. Meanwhile, Russia continued to project military aggression toward the U.S. and NATO outside the Middle East. Russia launched a snap naval aviation drill near its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad after reports emerged that NATO was considering bolstering its military presence along its eastern border with Russia. Russia launched one of its largest missile tests of the year on the day of the Vienna talks over Syria. Russia also may have backed pro-Russian parties in the former Soviet republic of Moldova, which ousted the pro-EU government on October 29. Russia's operations in the Middle East are part of a larger effort to expand Russia's military presence and political influence at the expense of the U.S. and its allies to an extent not witnessed since the end of the Cold War.

1) **Pacific.** 27 OCT: The U.S. Navy scrambled four F-18 jets after two Russian bombers approached within a nautical mile of the USS Ronald Reagan aircraft carrier during a joint exercise with South Korea in the Sea of Japan.

2) **Serbia.** 27-29 OCT: Serbian Prime Minister Aleksandar Vučić met with Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev and Russian President Vladimir Putin in Moscow. Vučić reportedly agreed to purchase Russian arms in addition to signing new economic cooperation deals.

3) **Syria.** 28 OCT- 03 NOV: Russia continued its air campaign in Syria, claiming to carry out strikes in Hama, Homs, Damascus, Aleppo, Raqqa, and Deir ez-Zour provinces.

30 OCT: Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov took part in international talks in Vienna over a resolution to the Syrian Civil War.

03 NOV: Russia and the U.S. carried out a short communications test over Syrian airspace with two fighter aircraft to test protocols outlined in the October 20 air safety memorandum of understanding.

03 NOV: Russia positioned five attack helicopters at the T4 airbase in Tiyas, 50 km west of ISIS-held Palmyra, according to an unnamed U.S. official.

03 NOV: The Russian MoD alleged that it had established "coordination groups" with unnamed Syrian opposition figures and had used information provided by opposition figures to carry out airstrikes.

4) **Russia.** 28 OCT: The deputy director of the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) announced the military alliance's readiness to carry out peacekeeping missions within the borders of member states and by UN mandate in other nations.

28 OCT: Russia successfully tested a "Yars" intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), firing it from the northwestern region of Archangelsk Oblast to Kamchatka in Russia's far northeast.

30 OCT: Russia conducted a large set of missile tests across the country, including ICBM tests and the launch of the "Kalibr" cruise missile in the Caspian Sea similar to those fired into Syria on October 7.

5) **Afghanistan.** 28 OCT: The head of Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) claimed that the likelihood of a "terrorist" incursion from northern Afghanistan into Central Asia had increased and called for greater border security cooperation between Russia and former Soviet republics in the region.

6) **Ukraine.** 28 OCT-03 NOV: Russian-backed separatists killed two Ukrainian soldiers and injured four in attacks near the separatist-held Donetsk airport on October 28 and 30. Separatists wounded three Ukrainian soldiers in a grenade launcher attack northwest of the separatist stronghold of Luhansk on November 3.

30 OCT: Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev announced that Russia will increase its trade tariffs against Ukraine in January 2016.

03 NOV: Russian-backed separatists threatened to postpone the withdrawal of light artillery systems from the frontline due to the uptick in fighting.

7) **Moldova.** 29 OCT: Moldova's parliament ousted the pro-EU coalition government after a no-confidence motion led by the pro-Russian opposition in the former Soviet republic.

8) **Baltic.** 29-30 OCT: Russia conducted snap drills involving Su-27 fighter jets and Su-24M bombers near its Baltic enclave of Kaliningrad.

9) **Saudi Arabia.** 29 OCT: Russia and Saudi Arabia exchanged lists of Syrian opposition groups, according to deputy Russian foreign minister Mikhail Bogdanov.

10) **Iran.** 30 OCT: Russian planes delivered Iranian arms to Syria twice daily over the previous ten days, according to unnamed intelligence officials.

03 NOV: Russia and Iran are nearing an agreement over a contract to supply Tehran with S-300 anti-aircraft missile systems, according to the head of Russian state arms exporter Rosoboronexport.

11) **India.** 02 NOV: Russian Defense Minister Sergey Shoygu announced that Russia and India will hold a joint anti-terror naval exercise later this year.

12) **Egypt.** 02 NOV: Russia and Egypt recently held negotiations over Russia's provision of equipment and KA-52K attack helicopters for the Mistral-class assault ships, according to Russian state media reports.

13) **Israel.** 03 NOV: The chief of staff of the Russian military claimed that Russia and Israel were frequently exchanging information about activities in Syrian as part of a de-confliction mechanism announced on September 21.