



Please cite as: EUAA, '[3.2. Russia](#)' in *COI Report - Syria: Country Focus*, March 2025.

3.2. Russia

For information regarding Russia's involvement in Syria prior to November 2024, see section 1.3.3. of the [EUAA COI Report Syria – Security Situation \(October 2024\)](#).

When the government of Bashar Al-Assad was toppled, Russia, with its primary focus on the Ukraine war, had limited resources at its disposal for Syria.[505](#) As a result, Russia was unable to offer substantial military support to the Assad government apart from some airstrikes.[506](#)

Following the fall of Assad's government, which reportedly came unexpectedly for Russia, Moscow engaged in actions that were described as 'largely reactive'.[507](#) While granting asylum to the former president, Russia shifted to a more balanced,[508](#) albeit cautious, stance towards the country's new rulers.[509](#) Ahmad Al-Sharaa, the leader of the transitional administration, for his part emphasised that he did not want Russia to exit from Syria in a way that undermined Russia-Syria relations,[510](#) describing them as 'strategic'[511](#). Agreements were reached to guarantee the safety of Russian diplomatic staff and to reduce Russian military personnel.[512](#) Later in December 2024, Russia reportedly withdrew its forces from all positions in the country's interior, including Qamishli[513](#) and the frontlines in northern Syria,[514](#) as well as from sites in the Alawite Mountains.[515](#)

As of early 2025, Russia still operated two military bases in Syria, namely Hmeimim Airport[516](#) and the Tartous Port in western Syria.[517](#) These bases had not been damaged during the advance of the opposition factions.[518](#) The new Syrian Transitional Administration provided guarantees to avoid any harm to these bases,[519](#) its leader Al-Sharaa initially stating that he would not rule out permitting the Russians to remain.[520](#) As of late January 2025, the transitional authorities have not forced a full exit of Russian forces from Syria.[521](#)

However, around mid-December 2024, there were media reports of satellite images suggesting that Russia was preparing to withdraw large amounts of military gear and personnel from Syria.[522](#) Since mid-December 2024, Russian Antonov AN-124 cargo planes and Ilyushin IL-76 aircraft have made regular flights from Hmeimim to al-Khadim, a base in Libya.[523](#) Moreover, in late January 2025, Russian cargo have begun to transport military equipment out of the port of Tartous.[524](#)

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