

Russia escalates role in Syrian conflict



Russia is sharply increasing its military support for the Assad regime in Syria, deploying dozens of aircraft and helicopters and thousands of troops to its new airbase near the port of Latakia



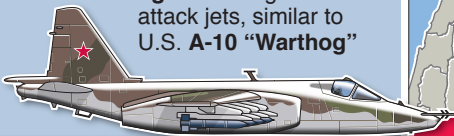
Russia's heavylift An-124 freighter

Latakia: Russia expanding facilities at **Bassel al-Assad Airport**, 25km south of city, to accommodate additional aircraft and personnel

Tartus: Small Soviet-era facility to become full-scale naval base

AIRCRAFT

■ **Su-25 "Frogfoot":** 12 ground-attack jets, similar to U.S. A-10 "Warthog"



■ **Su-24 "Fencer":** 12 long-range supersonic strike aircraft. Type also used by Syrian air force

■ **Su-30 "Flanker":** Four fighter jets

UNMANNED AIRCRAFT

■ Unarmed **Pchela 1T** drones reportedly flying surveillance missions

HELICOPTERS

■ At least 20. Possible types include **Mi-24 "Hind"** gunships and **Mi-17 "Hip"** transports



Mi-24

AIR DEFENCES

■ **SA-22 "Greyhound":** Russian short-range air defence gun / missile system deployed around airbase, according to U.S.



GROUND FORCES

■ **Personnel:** 2,000 being deployed as part of "first phase" of mission, including aircraft crews, engineers and troops to secure facility. Forces supplied through ongoing flights by **Il-76** and **An-124** cargo aircraft

■ **Equipment:** Seven **T-90** tanks at airbase, plus numerous trucks, 35 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) and 15 artillery guns

BTR-82 APC



NAVAL PREPARATIONS

■ Some 1,700 troops and specialists deployed to Tartus port to work on restructuring of Russian naval repair facility to handle bigger warships and transport vessels