

# افغانستان آزاد – آزاد افغانستان

AA-AA

چو کشور نېاشد تن من مېباد      بدين يوم وېر زنده يک تن مېباد  
همه سر به سر تن به کشتن دهيم      از آن به که کشور به دشمن دهيم

[www.afgazad.com](http://www.afgazad.com)

[afgazad@gmail.com](mailto:afgazad@gmail.com)

European Languages

زبان های اروپایی

<http://www.strategic-culture.org/news/2016/03/15/main-part-russian-forces-leave-syria-mission-accomplished.html>

## «Main Part» of Russian Forces to Leave Syria: Mission Accomplished

PETER KORZUN

3/15/2016

On March 14, Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered the Russian military to withdraw most of its forces from Syria. According to the President, Russia's Hmeimim air base in Latakia province and its Mediterranean naval base at Tartus would continue to operate as normal. He said both must be protected «from land, air and sea».

In a televised meeting with Russia's foreign and defense ministries, Putin said the Russian air campaign has allowed Syria's government forces to «radically» turn the tide of war and helped create conditions for peace talks.

*«With the tasks set before the Defense Ministry and the military largely fulfilled, I'm ordering the Defense Minister to start the pullout of the main part of our group of forces from Syria, beginning tomorrow», the President noted.*

The Russian aircraft have made 9,000 air sorties resulting in the devastation of Islamic State (IS) positions, arms depots, miles long oil tanker convoys, and the liberation of at least 400 towns and cities. Terrorists have been forced out from Latakia and Aleppo. With Russia's support from the

air, the Syrian army managed to retake control of oil and gas fields near Palmyra. The Hama and Homs Provinces in central Syria have been largely mopped up, and Kuweires airbase that had been besieged by terrorists for over three years was retaken. Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu reported to President Putin that thanks to the Russian air support the Syrian military has extended its control to 400 towns and villages over an area of 10,000 square kilometers.

All in all, 209 oil production facilities and almost 3,000 oil delivery vehicles have been destroyed by Russia's airstrikes. *«As a result of airstrikes, terrorists' resources' provision has been largely cut»*, Shoigu told the President, saying that petroleum trade routes with Turkey, as well as main routes of weapons provisions to militants, have been blocked. The Russian campaign has also reduced the threat posed to Russia by Islamic militants, as over 2,000 fighters from Russia have been *«eliminated»* in Syria, including 17 field commanders. To strengthen the progress achieved, Russian continues the aerial monitoring of the ceasefire's observance. *«A fairly large number of unmanned aerial vehicles – over 70 – are being used for this purpose, as are all means of gathering intelligence, including electronic intelligence and our satellite constellation»*, Shoigu stated.

«Efficient, accurate»: Russian air warfare in Syria is praised in a classified NATO report.

The President said, the move should help raise trust and serve as a stimulus for Syria's political talks. The President coordinated the move with Syrian President Bashar Assad, who voiced his readiness to *«quickly launch a political process»*.

Mr Putin called the Syrian leader on March 14 to inform him that a troop withdrawal would take place the next day, declaring that Russia's military intervention in the Syrian war had largely achieved objectives.

*«The task assigned to the Ministry of Defense and the Armed Forces as a whole has been largely accomplished, so I order the minister of defense to begin withdrawing the main part of our military factions of the Syrian Arab Republic tomorrow»*, Putin said.

*«I hope that today's decision will send a good signal to all conflicting parties»*, Putin said.

*«It will significantly increase the level of trust among the participants in the Syrian settlement and contribute to settling the Syrian issue by peaceful means»*, he added.

As for the Syrian President, Assad noted *«the professionalism, courage and heroism of the Russian service personnel who took part in the military operations, and expressed his profound gratitude to Russia for providing such substantial help in fighting terrorism and providing humanitarian assistance to the civilian population»*.

The United Nations Security Council has positively received the news of the Russian withdrawal from Syria. *«We have also taken very good note of the decision by the Russians to start*

*withdrawing part of these forces», the Security Council's rotating president, Angola's Ambassador Ismael Abraao Gaspar Martins, told reporters. «When we see forces withdrawing, it means war is being taking a different step. So that's good».*

The comments about Russia's partial withdrawal came amid fresh peace talks in Geneva aimed at resolving the five-year Syrian conflict. Representatives of both the Syrian government and opposition are meeting indirectly through a mediator to try to forge a path to peace. The UN's envoy to Syria, Staffan de Mistura, has meanwhile described the latest peace talks as a «moment of truth».

He said there was no «plan B» should the talks fail, with the only alternative being a return to war. On the agenda: how to govern Syria, a new constitution and presidential elections. Some see Russia's withdrawal as evidence that Mr Putin is sending a message that Syria must reach a political solution. It's worth to note the peace talks would not have resumed, but for the pressure Russia and the US put on all parties. Similarly, the ceasefire that went into effect two weeks ago was the product of US-Russian deal.

\* \* \*

Actually, the Russian air campaign has changed the whole dynamics of the situation in Syria. It resulted in successful cessation of the hostilities to hold for at least two weeks and still holding up. The preservation of the Syrian state should raise the geopolitical standards in the Middle East to a new level away from just arming militant groups as a way to achieve regime change. The Syrian people have a reason to cherish a hope their country will return to peaceful way of life. The announced partial withdrawal from Syria does not mean Russia is backing away from fighting Islamic State, but rather marks a turning point in the process of stabilizing Syria. At that, the Russian reduced military presence will serve as a warning to some forces, that if they try to seize the moment to hinder peace efforts, then all bets are off. Turkey and Saudi Arabia have openly stated their intention to deploy ground forces to the country. Meanwhile, Russia continues intensive diplomatic efforts to promote peace and put an end to the bloody conflict.