

# *Russia Announces Two Permanent Military Facilities in Syria*

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Moscow, December 26 (RHC)--The Russian Defense Ministry has started work on upgrading the bases in Tartus and Khmeimim in Syria into permanent military centers. Damascus has agreed to host Russian forces for at least 49 more years.

Earlier this year, Russia and Syria finalized an agreement regulating the presence of Russian troops in Syria. Khmeimim Airbase, located near Latakia, and the naval site in the port city of Tartus have both been handed over to Russia for 49 years lease-free, and with a condition of automatic extension unless either country chooses to terminate the deal.

The Russian parliament ratified the Khmeimim deal in July and the Tartus deal on Tuesday.

According to Russia Today, Defense Minister Sergey Shoigu reported on Tuesday that the details of the deployment and development of the two sites had been authorized by President Vladimir Putin last week.

Russia has been flying sorties from Khmeimim since 2015, when its Syria anti-terrorist campaign started. The site in Tartus has been operating since the 1970s, but was a small facility meant for resupplying

Soviet and later Russian ships.

The Russian Navy, however, reportedly intends to expand the facility significantly. Under the agreement with Syria, the future base would be allowed to host up to 11 Russian warships, including nuclear powered ships.

Earlier this month, President Putin ordered a partial withdrawal of Russian troops from Syria, saying the defeat of Islamic State (

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