

**News and Current Events :: Massive Russian naval buildup in Med off Israel and Syria****Massive Russian naval buildup in Med off Israel and Syria, on: 2013/11/5 10:32**

(I have a very clear feeling that Israel is steps away from terminating Irans nuclear programme, with or without American assistance)

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As Kerry met Egyptian and Saudi leaders, planning advanced for a Russian naval base in Egypt

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Moscow's request for a naval base in Egypt submitted last week by a visiting Russian general prompted US Secretary of State John Kerry's decision to hurry up and visit Cairo and Riyadh for an attempt to smooth their prickly relations over Washington's policies for Syria and Iran. However, Sunday, Nov. 3, the day he stopped over in Cairo en route for Riyadh, saw a mighty buildup of Russian naval strength in the Mediterranean.

Russia's Pacific Fleet flagship, the Varyag, and the powerful nuclear-fueled battleship Pyotr Veliky arrived to carry out a number of tasks with other Russian Navy ships in the region, according to the official statement from Moscow.

debkafile's military sources report that the two new arrivals expand Russia's Mediterranean naval presence to 16 vessels. Among them are the missile cruiser Moskva and three of Russian navy's largest amphibian craft, the Aleksandr Shabalin, the Novocherkassk and the Minsk, all carrying large detachments of marines, and a fourth landing craft, the Azov, there since last month.

The Russian fleet has moved into the vacuum left by the withdrawal of US warships which followed President Barack Obama's decision not to attack Syria's chemical weapons. It has established the largest Russian presence ever in the Mediterranean with the strongest firepower of any other force in the eastern and central stretches of this water. Russian warships are now present opposite Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel, Egypt, the Suez Canal and Libya.

Moscow's request for a naval base to serve this fleet hovered in the background of John Kerry's conversation with Saudi King Abdullah and Foreign Minister Saud al-Faisal Monday, Nov 4. His departure from Cairo was dogged by rumors of an impending visit to Egypt by President Vladimir Putin.

As debkafile reported earlier, Saudi Arabia engineered the Russian-Egyptian rapprochement with a view to bringing Russian military advisers back to Egypt for the first time since they were thrown out in 1972. Moscow was designated as major arms supplier to the Egyptian army in lieu of Washington.

debkafile's words reveal the four locations Moscow has chosen for port facilities to accommodate its war fleet:

--- Alexandria. A dock or berth in the big port of Alexandria and the use of a group of port warehouses to be developed into naval facilities of the sort Russia built in the Syrian port of Tartus. Moscow did not indicate plans to quit Tartus, but the urgency of its request to Cairo suggested its desire for an alternative Mediterranean base in case it had to leave Syria in haste. In any case, Tartus has only been partly operational in recent months.

--- Damietta. This port is located on the western tributary of the Nile, 15 km from the Mediterranean Sea and 70 km from Port Said.

--- Port Said at the northern terminus of the Suez Canal.

--- Rosetta (Rasid) in the Nile Delta, 65 km east of Alexandria.

Our military sources say that a naval base at any of these ports will give Russia a foothold on a central Mediterranean shore and make it the only superpower with a naval and military presence in control of the vastly important Suez Canal to world shipping and trade and the principle marine link connecting US naval and military forces in the Mediterranean and Persian Gulf.

That no joint communiqués were issued before Kerry departed Cairo and Riyadh illustrated the intractability of their feud with Washington.

The US Secretary spoke on his own behalf to US embassy staff in the Saudi capital.

Washington's relationship with the Saudis was crucial, as the region faced changes and challenges from the transition in Egypt to the civil war in Syria, he said and went on to stress: "The Saudis are very, very important to all of us. The Saudis are really the senior player in the Arab world together with Egypt." Observers noted that Kerry did not touch on any understandings reached with the Egyptian and Saudi governments in his two days of talks with their leaders.

His visit to Egypt was the first by a senior US official since Mohamed Morsi was deposed as president in July, and the first to Saudi Arabia since intelligence chief Prince Bandar bin Sultan warned last month of a "shift away" from Washington and announced Saudi abdication of its seat on the UN Security Council.

After Riyadh, the Secretary of State continues his Middle East tour, arriving Tuesday night in Jerusalem and meeting Palestinian leaders in Bethlehem Wednesday. He will also make stops in Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Algeria and Morocco.

<http://debka.com/article/23414/As-Kerry-met-Egyptian-and-Saudi-leaders-planning-advanced-for-a-Russian-naval-base-in-Egypt->