

Defense Ministry Seeking New Locations for Air Bases Abroad

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 27, 2014

The  **Moscow Times**

The Defense Ministry plans to expand its military presence to several key regions outside Russia in an effort to increase its long-range bomber coverage.

"We need bases for refueling [our aircraft] near the equator, and in other places," Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu said, adding that negotiations are close to producing a result, Itar-Tass reported Wednesday.

Talks are underway with Seychelles, Singapore, Nicaragua, and Venezuela, Shoigu said. This would extend Russian bomber coverage throughout several key strategic areas in the Southern hemisphere and along the equator, a significant expansion of Russia's historical and existing range.

While Russia is working on securing bases in far off locales, it has also been beefing up its military presence in the post-Soviet sphere.

In 2013 Russian fighter aircraft were stationed in Belarus for combat duty, and this year a Russian army regiment, which typically consists of around 5,000 troops, will be stationed there as well, Shoigu said.

Russian military presence in Tajikistan will be increased to divisional strength, which is around 15,000 troops, up from its current 7,000-strong detachment.

In what Shoigu called a "serious reinforcement of Russian forces in Kyrgyzstan," the Russian military will nearly double its troop strength at the base outside of Bishkek, the Central Asian Republic's capital, in order to facilitate the deployment of Russian air force and paratrooper units.

At present, Russia operates nine military bases worldwide. These facilities are located in Armenia, Abkhazia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Syria, Tajikistan, Ukraine and South Ossetia.

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