

Russia Says Test-Fired Missiles in Eastern Mediterranean Drills

By [AFP](#)

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Russian Defense Ministry

Russia's army said Tuesday it had fired hypersonic missiles during naval and Air Force drills in the eastern Mediterranean that come as its ally Syria loses ground to Islamist rebels.

The military said the number of Russian troops stationed in the region had been "increased" to take part in the exercises.

Russia has been carrying out air strikes in recent days to try to counter a rebel offensive that has seen President Bashar al-Assad's forces lose the second city of Aleppo.

Moscow has been a key ally of Assad since the Syrian civil war started in 2011.

"On 3 December, during an exercise to test the combined activities of Russian Navy and Air

Force troop groups, precision sea-based missiles were launched in the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea," Russia's Defense Ministry said in a post on Telegram.

Russian vessels test-fired hypersonic Zirkon missiles and a Kalibr cruise missile, the ministry added.

An Onyx cruise missile was launched "from a designated area on the Mediterranean coast," it added.

Russia has a naval base in Syria at Tartus but the statement did not say where the drills were carried out.

"In the course of preparing for the exercise, the Russian Armed Forces' troops grouping in the eastern Mediterranean was increased," the ministry added.

More than 1,000 forces, 10 vessels and 24 aircraft were taking part in the drills, it said.

The ministry [published](#) images showing the launch of several missiles from ships and land and images of a target in open water being hit and exploding.

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