

Russia rejects US media reports of sending more military gear to Syria

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Moscow: Russia's Defense Ministry has rejected US media reports that Moscow was actually increasing its military presence in war-torn Syria despite a withdrawal announcement last week.

File pic - Russian President Vladimir Putin

Major General Igor Konashenkov, the Russian Defense Ministry spokesman, said that reports are not true as it continues to reduce military presence in Syria.

“The four Su-25 aircraft have indeed been transferred from Russia to Hmeimin air base in Syria within the framework of scheduled rotation,” the spokesman said.

According to the spokesman, the first six Su-24 bombers have already been withdrawn to Russia and some other aircraft with pilots and technical staff will shortly follow suit.

The Russian naval group, which includes the country's sole aircraft carrier Admiral Kuznetsov with over 40 aircraft, is also on its way to the permanent base in Severomorsk, Russia.

Russian President Vladimir Putin had last week ordered a gradual reduction of his country's military presence in Syria after the Syrian government and the opposition groups reached a nationwide truce agreement in late December.

The reaction comes in the wake of two unnamed US officials alleging that Russia was actually increasing its armed forces in Syria although the country began to pull its aircraft carrier group out of the Mediterranean last Friday. They also claimed that four Russian Su-25 jets, known as Frogfoots by NATO, arrived in Syria on Monday.

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