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# Syria Primer

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>  
<http://www.flags.net/SYRA.htm>

**Prepared By** The Virtual Information Center, (808)-477-3661 x2000 on 24 April 2003

## **Syria Primer**

### **Executive Summary**

**1. Assessment:** Relations between Syria and the U.S. in the wake of Operation Iraqi Freedom is best termed as “tense.” Syria has long been listed by the U.S. as one of six state sponsors of terrorism, yet has garnered U.S. public praise for its cooperation in the war on terror that has “helped save American lives”. Thinking perhaps that Syrian assistance with the war on terror was more valuable to the U.S. than conforming to U.S. policy on Iraq, Syria has actively engaged the U.S. in a war of words over its’ support of Saddam Hussein’s regime. At one point in the escalation, the press speculated that Syria was the next target for coalition military action. Syria appears in the short-term to have finally acceded to U.S. demands as evidenced by the closure of its border to Iraqis seeking safe haven and handing two prominent Hussein regime members over to coalition troops

**2. Background:** Following the breakup of the Ottoman Empire during World War I, Syria was administered by the French until independence in 1946. The Syrian Arab Republic was dominated over the last thirty years by President Hafez al-Assad until his death in June 2000. Hafez al-Assad's son, Bashar, an ophthalmologist by training, succeeded his father. The young leader, is heralded as the symbol of Syria's private sector new guard who are keen to increase exports and development of Information Technology. Economic progress, though steady, has been slow with some real changes to the exchange rate, banking secrecy and private banking. Further planned reforms include the revision of the Code of Commerce, a new tax policy and the creation of a stock market. The global economic crisis will likely increase pressure on the government to accelerate the pace of economic reforms and diversify the economic base away from oil and agriculture in order to provide employment for Syria's rapidly-growing population. Efforts to reform the political systems have begun, notably the release of many political detainees and reforms of Parliament and the political parties. More change will be needed in order to meet popular expectations. Still outstanding is the issue of peace with Israel, based on the principle of full withdrawal from the Golan Heights. Since 1976, Syrian troops have been stationed in Lebanon.

**3. Discussion:** In the months leading up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, Syria ignored repeated U.S. diplomatic requests that it stop shipping military contraband to Iraq, choosing instead to increase the flow of arms. Further, Syria actively encouraged other Arab states to decline to offer assistance or facilities to any military operation, which could threaten Iraq. After the war began, Syria called on non-Iraqi Arabs to take up arms against the coalition. President Bashar al-Assad personally entered the fray when he publicly hoped that coalition troops in Iraq would be defeated and endorsed the call for non-Iraqi Arabs saying "It is natural for all the Arab countries to defend any Arab country facing an invasion". The result is that Syria is now publicly accused by the U.S. of engaging in conduct that has taken, rather than saved, American lives.

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## **Table of Contents**

|   |           |
|---|-----------|
| <b>Executive Summary .....</b>                              | <b>2</b>  |
| <b>1. Introduction.....</b>                                 | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>A. Overview .....</b>                                    | <b>5</b>  |
| <b>B. Crime Information.....</b>                            | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>C. Traffic Safety and Road Conditions.....</b>           | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>2. History – Brief Overview.....</b>                     | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>A. Early History .....</b>                               | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>B. Crusaders and Conquerers .....</b>                    | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>C. The Foundations of Modern Syria .....</b>             | <b>9</b>  |
| <b>D. An Independent Nation .....</b>                       | <b>10</b> |
| <b>E. The Assad Regime.....</b>                             | <b>11</b> |
| <b>3. People And Culture.....</b>                           | <b>12</b> |
| <b>A. Population.....</b>                                   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>B. Ethnic Groups .....</b>                               | <b>13</b> |
| <b>C. Religions.....</b>                                    | <b>13</b> |
| <b>D. Languages .....</b>                                   | <b>13</b> |
| <b>4. Health.....</b>                                       | <b>14</b> |
| <b>A. Health Risks.....</b>                                 | <b>14</b> |
| <b>5. Climate and Topography .....</b>                      | <b>17</b> |
| <b>6. Government.....</b>                                   | <b>17</b> |
| <b>A. Executive Branch .....</b>                            | <b>18</b> |
| Cabinet.....  | 21        |
| <b>B. Legislative Branch .....</b>                          | <b>24</b> |
| <b>C. Judicial Branch .....</b>                             | <b>25</b> |
| <b>7. Political Parties.....</b>                            | <b>26</b> |
| <b>8. Political Pressure Groups.....</b>                    | <b>26</b> |
| <b>9. International Organization Participation.....</b>     | <b>26</b> |
| <b>10. Syrian Embassy in the United States .....</b>        | <b>27</b> |
| <b>11. U.S. Diplomatic representation: .....</b>            | <b>27</b> |
| <b>12. Economy.....</b>                                     | <b>28</b> |
| <b>13. Infrastructure.....</b>                              | <b>30</b> |
| <b>14. Military .....</b>                                   | <b>32</b> |
| <b>A. Leadership .....</b>                                  | <b>32</b> |
| Minister for Defense: Lieutenant General Mustafa Tlass..... | 32        |
| ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF .....                           | 33        |
| Lieutenant General Hassan Turkmani .....                    | 33        |
| AIR FORCES AND AIR DEFENCE FORCES COMMANDER .....           | 33        |
| Major General Ali Mahmoud.....                              | 33        |
| COMMANDER OF THE NAVY.....                                  | 33        |
| Major General Wael Nasser.....                              | 33        |
| COMMANDER OF THE AIR AND AIR DEFENCE FORCES.....            | 34        |
| Major General Mohammad Kamal Mahmoud Mahfouz .....          | 34        |
| <b>B. Armed Forces Overview.....</b>                        | <b>35</b> |

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|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Army .....   | 35        |
| Navy .....   | 35        |
| Air Force .....                                    | 35        |
| Defense Budget .....                               | 36        |
| <b>C. Command and Control.....</b>                 | <b>36</b> |
| Command Changes .....                              | 37        |
| <b>D. Army.....</b>                                | <b>37</b> |
| ARMY SUMMARY .....                                 | 37        |
| <b>E. Air Force .....</b>                          | <b>45</b> |
| AIR FORCE SUMMARY .....                            | 46        |
| <b>F. Navy .....</b>                               | <b>53</b> |
| NAVY SUMMARY .....                                 | 53        |
| <b>15. Other Sources of Current Interest .....</b> | <b>57</b> |

# Syria Primer

## 1. Introduction

### A. Overview

Syria is a country in Western Asia on the Mediterranean Sea bounded in the north by Turkey, in the east by Iraq, in the south by Jordan and by Israel and Lebanon in the southwest. The total land area is 185,200 km<sup>2</sup> and mountainous areas alternate with fertile plains and desert.

The population is about 16.5 million and the 2001 GDP estimate is US\$14.8 billion which equates to US\$986 *per capita*. The currency is the Syrian pound (S£). Exports include cotton, cereals, oil, phosphates and tobacco. Formerly under a French mandate, the country became independent in 1946.

In 1958, Syria merged with Egypt to form the United Arab Republic (UAR) but, following a military coup in 1961, seceded and became the Syrian Arab Republic. In 1963, a government was formed which was chiefly made up from the Arab Socialist Renaissance (Ba'ath) party but this lasted for only three years before being removed by the army. In 1970 the moderate wing of the Ba'ath party, led by Lt General Hafez al-Assad seized power in a bloodless coup. Assad was appointed President and head of government and has effectively made Syria a one-party state.

Under Assad, Syria has played a leading role in Middle Eastern affairs, suffering badly in the Six Day and Yom Kippur Wars. After the latter, which, following extremely fierce fighting, the strategically vital Golan Heights were annexed by Israel. Assad intervened in the civil war in Lebanon eventually committing some 50,000 troops to the fighting. Recent politics in the area of the Former Warsaw Pact have changed the nature of Syrian international relationships. Difficulties with the local economy have gradually pushed Syria towards the West with the expectation of aid following a switch of allegiance. Shifts in Syrian policy towards Lebanon, resulting in direct conflict with the aims of an Iran seeking to create an Islamic republic, and a crack down on Hizbullah, led to a private visit by the former US President Jimmy Carter, after which relations with the West have steadily improved.

Syria sided with the Allies after Iraq's invasion of Kuwait and even contributed troops to the coalition. In 1990, diplomatic relations with Britain were restored and, in the following year, President Assad agreed to a US-inspired Middle East peace plan. In 1994, Israel offered partial withdrawal from the Golan Heights in return for a wider ranging peace treaty with Syria.

In June 2000, Syria's President Hafez al-Assad died and the Syrian regime threw itself into securing his son Bashar al-Assad's succession. The change of leadership also brought optimism that Syria's new western-educated president might take a more conciliatory line towards Israel. Bashar's official announcements, however, indicated that he would be sticking to his father's foreign policy. In his investiture speech of July 2000 Bashar reaffirmed Syria's determination to require all territory captured by Israel as a

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precondition for peace. He stressed that while Syria was "in a hurry to make peace" it was unwilling to compromise on territorial integrity or sovereignty to achieve this objective. The eruption of Israeli-Palestinian violence in late September 2000, presented Bashar with his first foreign policy crisis since assuming the presidency and further damaged prospects for renewed peace talks. At a joint press conference in Cairo with Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, Bashar said the events in Jerusalem led him to conclude that circumstances were not right for the resumption of peace talks with Israel. "We cannot separate what happens in Jerusalem from what happens on the Golan," he said.

In April 2002 it was reported that Syria is defying UN Security Council sanctions on Iraq by importing at least 150,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude oil from its neighbor. US officials say this makes Damascus Iraq's single largest source of revenue outside the UN's oil-for-food program. The estimated US\$1 billion a year it earns Baghdad could be helping Saddam Hussein to fund his clandestine programs to develop weapons of mass destruction (WMD), officials say.

Washington officials say that they have repeatedly raised this issue with Damascus, demanding that the Iraqi exports must be made to comply with Security Council resolutions. So far, the Syrians have ignored these remonstrations.

Although Syria remains on the US blacklist as an alleged sponsor of terrorism, Damascus has reined in the Hizbullah militants in south Lebanon somewhat during the current intifada. Syria is a key element in Middle East peacemaking and too much pressure on other issues could be counter-productive. With the Israeli-Palestinian bloodletting escalating and the attendant risk of a widening conflict in the region, the prospect of the US intensifying pressure on Damascus over the oil issue is probably not high.

<http://www4.janes.com>

**Country name:** *conventional long form:* Syrian Arab Republic  
*conventional short form:* Syria  
*local short form:* Suriyah  
*former:* United Arab Republic (with Egypt)  
*local long form:* Al Jumhuriyah al Arabiyah as Suriyah

**Capital:** Damascus

**Administrative divisions:** 14 provinces (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah); Al Hasakah, Al Ladhqiyyah, Al Qunaytirah, Ar Raqqah, As Suwayda', Dar'a, Dayr az Zawr, Dimashq, Halab, Hamah, Hims, Idlib, Rif Dimashq, Tartus

**Dependent areas:** NA

**Independence:** 17 April 1946 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)

**National** Independence Day, 17 April (1946)

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**holiday:**

**Constitution:** 13 March 1973

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

### **B. Crime Information**

Crime is generally not a serious problem for travelers in Syria. The loss or theft of a U.S. passport abroad should be reported immediately to local police and the nearest U.S. embassy or consulate. U.S. citizens may refer to the Department of State pamphlet, *A Safe Trip Abroad*, for ways to promote a trouble-free journey. The pamphlet is available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at <http://travel.state.gov>.  
<http://travel.state.gov/syria.html>

### **C. Traffic Safety and Road Conditions**

While in a foreign country, U.S. citizens may encounter road conditions that differ significantly from those in the United States. The information below concerning Syria is provided for general reference only, and it may not be totally accurate in a particular location or circumstance.

Safety of Public Transportation: Good  
Urban Road Conditions/Maintenance: Good  
Rural Road Conditions/Maintenance: Good  
Availability of Roadside Assistance: Poor

Driving in Syria can be hazardous and requires great caution. Although drivers generally follow traffic signs and signals, they often maneuver aggressively and show little regard for vehicles traveling behind them. Lane markings are usually ignored. Vehicles within Syrian traffic circles must give way to oncoming traffic, unlike in the United States. Pedestrians must also exercise caution. Parked cars, deteriorating pavement, and guard posts obstruct sidewalks, often forcing pedestrians to walk in the street.

For additional general information about road safety, including links to foreign government sites, please see the Department of State, Bureau of Consular Affairs home page at [http://travel.state.gov/road\\_safety.html](http://travel.state.gov/road_safety.html). For specific information concerning Syrian driver's permits, vehicle inspection, road tax and mandatory insurance, please contact the Syrian Embassy in Washington, D.C.

<http://travel.state.gov/syria.html>

## **2. History – Brief Overview**

### **A. Early History**

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century the term *Syria* generally denoted those lands of the Levant, or eastern littoral of the Mediterranean, that correspond to modern Syria and Lebanon, most of Israel and Jordan, Western Iraq, and Northern Saudi Arabia. Three geographical factors have played major parts in determining the history of Syria—its location on the trade and military routes, its varied topography, and the encroaching desert. Syria has always been an object of conquest, and it has been held by foreign powers during much

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of its history. One of the earliest settlements was probably at Ugarit. The Amorites, coming around 2100 B.C. from the Arabian peninsula, were the first important Semitic people to settle in the region, and they established many small states.

From the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> century B.C. the area probably was part of the empire of the Hittites, although it came under Egyptian rule for long periods during that time. The first great indigenous culture was that of Phoenicia (located mostly in present-day Lebanon), which flourished after 1250 B.C. in a group of trading cities along the coast. In the 10<sup>th</sup> century B.C. two Hebrew kingdoms were organized in Palestine. Syria suffered (11<sup>th</sup> – 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.) long invasions and intermittent control by the empire of Assyria. Babylonian conquerors also found success in Syria, and Egypt constantly sought to reestablish its position there. The Syrians were subjected to massacres, plundering, and forced deportations.

Under the Persian Empire, with its efficient administrative system, Syria's standard of living improved (6<sup>th</sup> – 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.). Alexander the Great conquered Syria between 333 and 331 B.C., and his short-lived empire was followed by that of the Seleucidae, who are usually called kings of Syria. Their control of Syria was constantly threatened by Egypt, which was ruled by the Ptolemies. The Egyptians usually held the south until Antiochus III conquered (early 2<sup>d</sup> century B.C.) the region, which was generally called Coele Syria, a name which had been vaguely applied to all of Western Syria. The Seleucids founded cities and military colonies and introduced Hellenistic civilization to Syria. Syria long showed the revivifying effects of this new culture. Many of the cities became cultural Hellenistic centers, but the change did not reach the lower levels of the population.

When invasions began again, first by the Armenians under Tigranes and then by the Parthians—both in the 1<sup>st</sup> century B.C. — the Hellenistic sheen was soon dulled. The Romans under Pompey conquered the region by 63 B.C., but they continued to fight the Parthians there, and the Syrians benefited little from the Roman presence. Many changes in administration occurred, and Rome drew from Syria numerous soldiers and slaves. The old pagan gods of Syria were also taken up by the Romans. More significant for the future of Syria, Christianity was started in Palestine and soon exerted some influence over all of Syria; St. Paul was converted from Judaism to Christianity on the road to Damascus. In central Syria, Palmyra grew (3<sup>d</sup> century A.D.) to considerable power as an autonomous state, but it was conquered by the Romans when it threatened their ascendancy.

After the division of Rome into the Eastern and Western empires in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, Syria came under Byzantine rule. In the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> century Monophysitism, a Christian heresy with political overtones, gained many adherents in Syria. Byzantine control there was seriously weakened by the 7<sup>th</sup> century. Between 633 and 640, Muslim Arabs conquered Syria, and during the following centuries most Syrians converted to Islam. Damascus was the usual capital of the Umayyad caliph (661–750) and enjoyed a period of great splendor. The Umayyads were forcibly displaced by the Abbasids, whose residence was in Iraq, thus ending Syria's dominant position in the Islamic world. At the same time the



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ties between Muslim Syria and the predominantly Christian southwest (later Lebanon) began to loosen.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861413.html>

### **B. Crusaders and Conquerers**

Groups of Christians remained in the Muslim areas, and they generally rendered aid to the Christians who came to Syria on Crusades (11<sup>th</sup> – 14<sup>th</sup> century). By the late 11<sup>th</sup> century the Seljuk Turks had captured most of Syria, and the Christians fought against them as well as against Saladin, who triumphed (late 12<sup>th</sup> century) over both the Christians and his fellow Muslims. After Saladin's death (1193), Syria fell into disunity, and in the mid-13<sup>th</sup> century it was overrun by the Mongols under Hulagu Khan, who destroyed (1260) much of Aleppo and Damascus, massacring about 50,000 inhabitants of Aleppo. The Mongols were defeated later in 1260 by Baybars, the Mamluk ruler of Egypt.

The Mamluks held control of Syria for most of the time until 1516, when the Ottoman Empire annexed the area. The Mamluk period was largely a time of economic stagnation and political unrest. In 1401 the Central Asian conqueror Timur sacked Aleppo and Damascus. For most of the four centuries of Ottoman control, Syria's economy continued to be weak, and its politics remained fragmented. From the later 16<sup>th</sup> century, government in Syria was not directly controlled by the Ottomans but was in the hands of several Syrian families who often fought each other. From the late 18<sup>th</sup> century the European powers took an increasing interest in Syrian affairs, the British as friends of the Druze, the Russians as protectors of the Orthodox Christians, and the French as allies of the Roman Catholics (especially the Maronites).

In 1798 – 99, Napoleon I of France invaded Egypt and also briefly held parts of the Syrian coast. In 1832–33, Ibrahim Pasha, the son of Muhammad Ali of Egypt, annexed Syria to Egypt. Egypt held Syria until 1840, when the European powers (particularly Great Britain) forced its return to the Ottomans; during this time Syria's economy was revived and numerous schools were established. During the rest of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Syrian economy was modernized somewhat and educational opportunities were increased. However, conditions were far from good, and growing resentment of Ottoman rule developed among the Syrians. After bloody fighting between Christians and Druze, Lebanon (largely inhabited by Christians) was given considerable autonomy in 1860.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861413.html>

### **C. The Foundations of Modern Syria**

During World War I the British encouraged Syrian nationalists to fight against the Ottoman Empire. The ambitions of the nationalists were thwarted in the peace settlement, which gave (1920) France a League of Nations mandate over the Levant States (roughly present-day Syria and Lebanon). From this time the term *Syria* referred approximately to its present territorial extent. France divided Syria into three administrative districts on the pretext that political decentralization would safeguard the rights of minorities. The Arab nationalists angrily asserted that decentralization was also a means of maintaining French control by a divide-and-rule policy.

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The French made some concessions after serious disturbances in 1925, which included a rebellion by the Druze and the French bombardment of Damascus. Lebanon was made a completely separate state in 1926, and after long negotiations a treaty was signed (1936) giving Syria a large measure of autonomy. Anti-French feeling continued as a result of the cession of the sanjak of Alexandretta to Turkey, completed in 1939. In the same year the French suspended the Syrian constitution, and in World War II they garrisoned Syria with a large number of troops, most of whom, after the fall of France in June, 1940, declared loyalty to the Vichy government. Relations with Great Britain deteriorated, and when it was discovered that Syrian airfields had been used by German planes en route to Iraq, British and Free French forces invaded and occupied Syria in June, 1941.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861413.html>

#### **D. An Independent Nation**

In accordance with previous promises, the French proclaimed the creation of an independent Syrian republic in September, 1941, and an independent Lebanese republic in November, 1941. In 1943, Shukri al-Kuwatli was elected president of Syria, and on January 1, 1944, the country achieved complete independence. However, the continued presence of French troops in Syria caused increasing friction and bloodshed and strained Anglo-French relations. It was not until April, 1946, that all foreign troops were withdrawn from the country. In 1945, Syria had become a charter member of the United Nations.

A member of the Arab League, Syria joined other Arab states in the unsuccessful war (1948 – 49) against Israel. The defeat at the hands of Israel, coupled with serious internal divisions resulting from disagreements over whether to unite with Iraq (and thus form a “Greater Syria”), undermined confidence in parliamentary government and led to three coups in 1949. Lt. Col. Adib al-Shishakli led the third coup (December, 1949), and he governed the country until 1954. A new constitution providing for parliamentary government was promulgated in 1950, but it was suspended in late 1951. From then until 1954, al-Shishakli ruled as a virtual dictator. In 1953 he issued a new constitution establishing a presidential form of government and was elected president.

Opposition to al-Shishakli's one-man rule led to his downfall in 1954 and the reinstatement of the 1950 constitution. After elections in late 1954 a coalition government uniting the People's, National, and Ba'ath parties and headed by Sabri al-Asali of the National party was established; Shukri al-Kuwatli was again elected president. In the following years the Ba'ath party, which combined Arab nationalism with a socialist program, emerged as the most influential political party in Syria. At the same time, in order to offset growing Western influence in the Middle East (exemplified by the creation in 1955 of the Baghdad Pact alliance, later known as the Central Treaty Organization), both Syria and Egypt signed economic and military accords with the USSR.

To counterbalance Soviet influence, Syria joined with Egypt to form (February, 1958) the United Arab Republic (UAR). By late 1959, Egypt had become dominant in the UAR, which led to growing Syrian opposition to continued union with Egypt. In September, 1961, a group of Syrian army officers seized control of Syria, withdrew the country from

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the UAR, and established the Syrian Arab Republic. Elections for a constituent assembly were held in late 1961; the assembly chose Maruf al-Dawalibi as prime minister and Nazim al-Qudsi as president of the country; both were conservatives and members of the People's party. In early 1962 a military coup ended this arrangement, and in late 1962 the 1950 constitution was reinstated.

In 1963 another coup brought a joint Ba'ath-military government to power; this regime was headed, at different times, by Salah al-Din al-Bitar, a moderate leader of the Ba'ath party, and by Gen. Amin al-Hafiz. The government nationalized much of the economy and redistributed land to the peasants. At the same time a split between moderate and radical elements in the Ba'ath party was growing. In early 1966 the radicals staged a successful coup and installed Yusseff Zayen as prime minister and Nureddin al-Attassi as president. The new government strengthened Syria's ties with Egypt and the USSR.

Between 1962 and 1966 Syria agitated Israeli interests by attempting to divert headwaters of the Jordan River, by firing on Israeli fishermen on the Sea of Galilee, and by using the Golan Heights to snipe at Israeli settlements. These conflicts contributed to the Arab-Israeli War of June, 1967. During the war Israel captured the Golan Heights (stretching about 12 mi/19 km into Syria northeast of the Sea of Galilee), and it held on to this territory after a cease-fire went into effect. After the war Syria maintained its anti-Israel stance. In 1968 – 69 the Ba'ath party was again torn by factional strife, and it divided into the “progressives” (led by al-Attassi), who favored state control of the economy and close cooperation with the USSR, and the “nationalists” (headed by Gen. Hafez al-Assad), who emphasized the need to defeat Israel, to improve relations with other Arab states, and to lessen Syria's economic and military dependence on the USSR.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861413.html>

### **E. The Assad Regime**

Al-Assad successfully ousted al-Attassi in November, 1970. In early 1971, al-Assad was overwhelmingly elected to a seven-year term as president; he has been reelected several times since. Later in 1971, Syria, Libya, and Egypt agreed to unite loosely in the Federation of Arab Republics. Syria continued to be on good terms with the USSR, which equipped the Syrian army with modern weapons. In early 1973 a new constitution was approved, and the Ba'ath party won 70% of the seats in elections for the people's council. In July – August, 1973, about 42 army officers (all Sunni Muslims) were executed after allegedly plotting to assassinate al-Assad, who, they claimed, showed undue favoritism to his fellow Alawite Muslims in the army.

In October, 1973, the fourth Arab-Israeli War erupted; after initial Syrian advances in the Golan Heights, Israel gained the offensive and pushed into Syria a few miles beyond the Golan Heights region. Syria (like Israel) accepted the UN Security Council cease-fire resolution of October 25, 1973, but fighting continued into 1974. In May, 1974, largely through the mediation of U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger, Syria and Israel signed an agreement in Geneva that ended the fighting. Under the terms of the accord, Israel pulled back to the 1967 cease-fire line and also returned the city of Qunaytirah (Kuneitra) to Syria; a buffer zone, patrolled by UN troops, was established in the Golan Heights.

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Since the 1970s the rise of Sunni Islamic fundamentalism has challenged Ba'athist ideology. Between 1976 and 1982, urban centers erupted in political unrest. The Muslim Brotherhood, a radical religious and political organization founded in 1928 in Egypt, was largely responsible for extremist attacks. In February, 1982, the brotherhood unsuccessfully attempted an uprising in Hama but was quashed by government troops; thousands were killed. Islamic fundamentalism, however, continues to remain active.

In 1976, Syria sent forces to Lebanon as part of a peacekeeping force to help end that country's civil war. The Syrian military remained in Lebanon, and from 1980 to 1981, Syrian troops sided with Lebanese Muslims against the Christian militias. With Israel's invasion of Lebanon in June, 1982, Syrian troops clashed with Israeli forces and were pushed back. Syria was also antagonized by Israel in 1982, when Menachem Begin announced the annexation of the Golan Heights. By the late 1990s, more than 40 Jewish settlements and villages had been developed in the Golan Heights. Although Israel withdrew from Lebanon in 1985, Syrian forces stayed; they remain the dominant military and political force there.

The Syrian government has been implicated in sponsoring international terrorism, especially in support of Iranian, Palestinian, and Libyan causes. In the 1980s, Syria moved closer to the USSR and espoused hard-line Arab positions. By 1990, however, as the Soviet system faltered, Syria attempted to improve relations with Western countries. That year Syria was the first Arab country to condemn Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and it contributed 20,000 soldiers to the coalition forces in the Persian Gulf War (1991). Syria, along with Lebanon and a joint Palestinian-Jordanian delegation, became involved in peace talks with Israel in late 1991. As talks progressed between Israel and the PLO and Jordan, Syria's insistence that Israel withdraw from all of the Golan Heights proved a stumbling block in its own negotiations. Talks broke off in 1996, but the Syrian government appeared interested in renewing negotiations following the installation of a Labor government in Israel in 1999.

<http://www.infoplease.com/ce6/world/A0861413.html>

### 3. People And Culture

#### A. Population

**Population:** 17,155,814 (July 2002 est.)  
*note:* in addition, about 40,000 people live in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights - 20,000 Arabs (18,000 Druze and 2,000 Alawites) and about 20,000 Israeli settlers (February 2003 est.)

**Age structure:** 0-14 years: 39.3% (male 3,467,267; female 3,264,639)  
15-64 years: 57.5% (male 5,052,841; female 4,817,662)  
65 years and over: 3.2% (male 267,803; female 285,602) (2002 est.)

**Population growth rate:** 2.5% (2002 est.)

**Birth rate:** 30.11 births/1,000 population (2002 est.)

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**Death rate:** 5.12 deaths/1,000 population (2002 est.)

**Net migration rate:** 0 migrant(s)/1,000 population (2002 est.)

**Sex ratio:** *at birth:* 1.06 male(s)/female  
*under 15 years:* 1.06 male(s)/female  
*15-64 years:* 1.05 male(s)/female  
*65 years and over:* 0.94 male(s)/female  
*total population:* 1.05 male(s)/female (2002 est.)

**Infant mortality rate:** 32.73 deaths/1,000 live births (2002 est.)

**Life expectancy at birth:** *total population:* 69.08 years  
*female:* 70.32 years (2002 est.)  
*male:* 67.9 years

**Total fertility rate:** 3.84 children born/woman (2002 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - adult prevalence rate:** 0.01% (1999 est.)

**HIV/AIDS - people living with HIV/AIDS:** NA

**HIV/AIDS - deaths:** NA

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## **B. Ethnic Groups**

**Ethnic groups:** Arab 90.3%, Kurds, Armenians, and other 9.7%

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## **C. Religions**

Sunni Muslim 74%, Alawite, Druze, and other Muslim sects 16%, Christian (various sects) 10%, Jewish (tiny communities in Damascus, Al Qamishli, and Aleppo)

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## **D. Languages**

Arabic (official); Kurdish, Armenian, Aramaic, Circassian widely understood; French, English somewhat understood

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<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 4. Health

### A. Health Risks

The preventive measures you need to take while traveling in the Middle East depend on the areas you visit and the length of time you stay. You should observe the precautions listed in this document in most areas of this region. However, in highly developed areas of Israel, you should observe health precautions similar to those that would apply while traveling in the United States.

Travelers' diarrhea, the number one illness in travelers, can be caused by viruses, bacteria, or parasites, which can contaminate food or water. Infections may cause diarrhea and vomiting (*E. coli*, *Salmonella*, cholera, and parasites), fever (typhoid fever and toxoplasmosis), or liver damage (hepatitis). Make sure your food and drinking water are safe.

Malaria is a preventable infection that can be fatal if left untreated. Prevent infection by taking prescription antimalarial drugs and protecting yourself against mosquito bites. Travelers to some areas of Iran, Iraq, Oman, Saudi Arabia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and Yemen may be at risk for malaria. There is no risk of malaria in Bahrain, Cyprus, Israel, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, and Qatar. For additional information on malaria risk and prevention, see *Malaria Information for Travelers to the Middle East*.

Dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, onchocerciasis, and plague are diseases carried by insects that also occur in this region. Protecting yourself against insect bites will help to prevent these diseases.

There is **no risk** for yellow fever in the Middle East. A certificate of yellow fever vaccination may be required for entry into certain of these countries if you are coming from countries in South America or sub-Saharan Africa. For detailed information, see *Comprehensive Yellow Fever Vaccination Requirements*.

### **CDC recommends the following vaccines (as appropriate for age):**

See your doctor at least 4–6 weeks before your trip to allow time for shots to take effect.

- Hepatitis A or immune globulin (IG).
- Hepatitis B, if you might be exposed to blood (for example, health-care workers), have sexual contact with the local population, stay longer than 6 months, or be exposed through medical treatment.
- Meningococcal vaccine is required for pilgrims to Mecca for the annual Hajj. However, CDC currently recommends the vaccine for **all** travelers to Mecca, including those traveling for the Umra. (For more information, please see *Meningococcal Disease Among Travelers to Saudi Arabia*.)
- Rabies, if you might be exposed to wild or domestic animals through your work or recreation.
- Typhoid, particularly if you are visiting developing countries in this region.

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- As needed, booster doses for tetanus-diphtheria and measles, and a one-time dose of polio for adults. Hepatitis B vaccine is now recommended for all infants and for children ages 11–12 years who have not completed the series.

**All travelers should take the following precautions, no matter the destination:**

- Wash hands often with soap and water.
- Because motor vehicle crashes are a leading cause of injury among travelers, walk and drive defensively. Avoid travel at night if possible and always use seat belts.
- Always use latex condoms to reduce the risk of HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases.
- Don't eat or drink dairy products unless you know they have been pasteurized.
- Don't share needles with anyone.
- Eat only thoroughly cooked food or fruits and vegetables you have peeled yourself. Remember: **boil it, cook it, peel it, or forget it.**
- Never eat undercooked ground beef and poultry, raw eggs, and unpasteurized dairy products. Raw shellfish is particularly dangerous to persons who have liver disease or compromised immune systems.

**Travelers visiting undeveloped areas should take the following precautions:**

**To stay healthy, do:**

- Drink only bottled or boiled water, or carbonated (bubbly) drinks in cans or bottles. Avoid tap water, fountain drinks, and ice cubes. If this is not possible, make water safer by BOTH filtering through an "absolute 1-micron or less" filter AND adding iodine tablets to the filtered water. "Absolute 1-micron filters" are found in camping/outdoor supply stores.
- If you visit an area where there is risk for malaria, take your malaria prevention medication before, during, and after travel, as directed. (See your doctor for a prescription.)
- **Protect yourself from mosquito bites:**
  - Prevent mosquito bites by wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants.
  - Use insect repellents that contain DEET (diethylmethyltoluamide).
  - Apply insect repellent to exposed skin. Mosquitoes that transmit malaria bite between dusk and dawn.
  - Unless you are staying in air-conditioned or well-screened housing, purchase a bed net impregnated with the insecticide permethrin.
  - For more information on protecting yourself from insect bites and DEET see *Protection against Mosquitoes and Other Arthropods*.
- To prevent fungal and parasitic infections, keep feet clean and dry, and do not go barefoot.

**To avoid getting sick:**

- Don't eat food purchased from street vendors.
- Don't drink beverages with ice.

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- Don't handle animals (especially monkeys, dogs, and cats), to avoid bites and serious diseases (including rabies and plague). (For more information, please see the Animal-Associated Hazards on the Making Travel Safe page.)
- Don't swim in fresh water. Salt water is usually safer. (For more information, please see the Swimming Precautions on the Making Travel Safe page.)

#### **What you need to bring with you:**

- Long-sleeved shirt and long pants to wear while outside whenever possible, to prevent illnesses carried by insects (e.g., malaria, dengue, filariasis, leishmaniasis, and onchocerciasis).
- Insect repellent containing DEET.
- Bed nets impregnated with permethrin (can be purchased in camping or military supply stores).
- Over-the-counter antidiarrheal medicine to take if you have diarrhea.
- Iodine tablets and water filters to purify water if bottled water is not available.
- Sunblock, sunglasses, hat.
- Prescription medications: make sure you have enough to last during your trip, as well as a copy of the prescription(s).

#### **After you return home:**

If you have visited a malaria-risk area, continue taking your antimalarial drug for 4 weeks (chloroquine, mefloquine, or doxycycline) or seven days (Malarone™) after leaving the risk area. Travelers who become ill with a fever or flu-like illness while traveling in a malaria-risk area and up to one year after returning home should seek prompt medical attention and should tell the physician their travel history.

<http://www.cdc.gov/travel/mideast.htm>

**MEDICAL FACILITIES:** Basic medical care and medicines are available in Syria's principal cities, but they are not necessarily available in outlying areas.

**MEDICAL INSURANCE:** The Department of State strongly urges Americans to consult with their medical insurance company prior to traveling abroad to confirm whether their policy applies overseas and if it will cover emergency expenses such as a medical evacuation. U.S. medical insurance plans seldom cover health costs incurred outside the United States unless supplemental coverage is purchased. Further, U.S. Medicare and Medicaid programs do not provide payment for medical services outside the United States. However, many travel agents and private companies offer insurance plans that will cover health care expenses incurred overseas, including emergency services such as medical evacuations.

When making a decision regarding health insurance, Americans should consider that many foreign doctors and hospitals require payment in cash prior to providing service and that a medical evacuation to the United States may cost well in excess of \$50,000. Uninsured travelers who require medical care overseas often face extreme difficulties.



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When consulting with your insurer prior to your trip, please ascertain whether payment will be made to the overseas healthcare provider or if you will be reimbursed later for expenses that you incur. Some insurance policies also include coverage for psychiatric treatment and for disposition of remains in the event of death.

Useful information on medical emergencies abroad, including overseas insurance programs, is provided in the Department of State's Bureau of Consular Affairs brochure, *Medical Information for Americans Traveling Abroad*, available via the Bureau of Consular Affairs home page or autofax: (202) 647-3000.

**OTHER HEALTH INFORMATION:** Information on vaccinations and other health precautions may be obtained from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's hotline for international travelers at 1-877-FYI-TRIP (1-877-394-8747; fax 1-888-CDC-FAXX (1-888-232-3299), or via the CDC's Internet site at <http://www.cdc.gov>.  
<http://travel.state.gov/syria.html>

## 5. Climate and Topography

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <b>Climate:</b>            | mostly desert; hot, dry, sunny summers (June to August) and mild, rainy winters (December to February) along coast; cold weather with snow or sleet periodically in Damascus |
| <b>Terrain:</b>            | primarily semiarid and desert plateau; narrow coastal plain; mountains in west   |
| <b>Elevation extremes:</b> | <i>lowest point:</i> unnamed location near Lake Tiberias -200 m<br><i>highest point:</i> Mount Hermon 2,814 m  |
| <b>Natural resources:</b>  | petroleum, phosphates, chrome and manganese ores, asphalt, iron ore, rock salt, marble, gypsum, hydropower   |
| <b>Land use:</b>           | <i>arable land:</i> 25.96%<br><i>permanent crops:</i> 4.08%<br><i>other:</i> 69.96% (1998 est.)  |
| <b>Irrigated land:</b>     | 12,130 sq km (1998 est.)   |
| <b>Natural hazards:</b>    | dust storms, sandstorms  |

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 6. Government

**Government type:** republic under military regime since March 1963

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|                                  |   |
|----------------------------------|---|
| <b>Capital:</b>                  | Damascus  |
| <b>Administrative divisions:</b> | 14 provinces (muhafazat, singular - muhafazah); Al Hasakah, Al Ladhqiyyah, Al Qunaytirah, Ar Raqqa, As Suwayda', Dar'a, Dayr az Zawr, Dimashq, Halab, Hamah, Hims, Idlib, Rif Dimashq, Tartus |
| <b>Dependent areas:</b>          | NA  |
| <b>Independence:</b>             | 17 April 1946 (from League of Nations mandate under French administration)  |
| <b>National holiday:</b>         | Independence Day, 17 April (1946)   |
| <b>Constitution:</b>             | 13 March 1973   |
| <b>Legal system:</b>             | based on Islamic law and civil law system; special religious courts; has not accepted compulsory ICJ jurisdiction   |
| <b>Suffrage:</b>                 | 18 years of age; universal  |

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

Governmental system based on Permanent Constitution of March 13, 1973. Theoretically, power divided into executive, legislative, and judicial spheres, but all institutions overshadowed by preeminence of president (reelected February 10, 1985, in national referendum for seven-year term), who was head of state, chief executive, and secretary of ruling Baath (Arab Socialist Resurrection) Party. People's Council, 195-member parliament, popularly elected in 1986 for term of four years. Judiciary based on amalgam of Ottoman, French, and Islamic laws and practices. Some legal rights abrogated under state of martial law, in effect since 1963.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

### **A. Executive Branch**

**Executive branch:** *chief of state:* President Bashar al-ASSAD (since 17 July 2000); Vice Presidents Abd al-Halim ibn Said KHADDAM (since 11 March 1984) and Muhammad Zuhayr MASHARIQA (since 11 March 1984)

*head of government:* Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa MIRU (since 13 March 2000), Deputy Prime Ministers Lt. Gen. Mustafa TALAS (since 11 March 1984), Farouk al-SHARA (since 13 December 2001), Dr. Muhammad al-HUSAYN (since 13 December 2001)

*cabinet:* Council of Ministers appointed by the president

*elections:* president elected by popular vote for a seven year term

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referendum/election last held 10 July 2000 - after the death of President Hafez al-ASSAD, father of Bashar al-ASSAD - (next to be held NA 2007); vice presidents appointed by the president; prime minister and deputy prime ministers appointed by the president

*note:* Hafez al-ASSAD died on 10 June 2000; on 20 June 2000, the Ba'th Party nominated Bashar al-ASSAD for president and presented his name to the People's Council on 25 June 2000

*election results:* Bashar al-ASSAD elected president; percent of vote - Bashar al-ASSAD 97.29%

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

### **The President and the Cabinet**

The president is elected for a seven-year term by universal suffrage. A candidate to the office must be a Syrian Arab Muslim, at least forty years of age, proposed by the Baath Party, and nominated by the People's Council. The nominee is submitted to a national referendum. To be elected, the candidate must receive an absolute majority of votes cast. If not, a new candidate must be selected by the Baath Party for formal nomination by the People's Council.

The Constitution states that in the case of the president's temporary disablement, the vice president becomes acting president. However, in 1982 Assad named three vice presidents-- Foreign Minister Abd al Halim Khaddam, Rifaat al Assad, and Baath Party deputy director Zuhayr Mashariqa--but none of the three was specifically designated as successor. If the presidency falls vacant by resignation or death, a referendum must be held within ninety days to elect a new president. Under certain circumstances, the prime minister may exercise presidential functions for up to ninety days.

The president cannot be removed except for high treason. Impeachment proceedings may be initiated through a petition signed by one-third of the members of the People's Council voting openly or by a petition of two-thirds of the council members voting at a special closed session. The president can be tried only by the High Constitutional Court, of which he is a member.

The president is both the head of state and the chief executive officer of the government. He is vested with sweeping powers that may be delegated, at his sole discretion, to his vice presidents. The president is also commander in chief of the armed forces. He appoints and dismisses the prime minister and other members of the Council of Ministers (the cabinet) and military officers.

Apart from executive authority relating to a wide range of governmental functions including foreign affairs, the president has the right to dissolve the People's Council, in which case a new council must be elected within ninety days from the date of dissolution. He may also exercise legislative power when the council is in recess, provided that all legislative acts promulgated by him are submitted to the legislature for approval at its

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first subsequent session. The Constitution also empowers the president to preempt legislative power even while the People's Council is in session "in case of absolute need relating to national security." It states, however, that all presidential decrees must be presented to the legislature for its endorsement. The council may, by a two-thirds vote, amend or rescind presidential decrees, provided that the two-thirds majority constitutes no fewer than the absolute majority of the council membership. The council's power to amend or nullify a presidential decree is only nominal, inasmuch as the council's action, whether for amendment or abrogation, is not to have a "retroactive effect."

Under the Constitution, presidential authority extends also to the broadly phrased "right to submit to popular referendum important matters relating to the higher interests of the country." However, the question of what constitutes "higher interests" is left undefined. The results of such a referendum are "binding and executory with effect from the date of their promulgation" by the president. The presidential emergency power granted under Article 113 provides a mandate that is beyond any legal challenge: "In case of grave danger threatening national unity or the security and independence of the national territory or impeding the government's exercise of its constitutional prerogatives, the President of the Republic has the right to take appropriate emergency measures." This article has been in effect since the late 1960s.

The Council of Ministers, headed by the prime minister, is responsible to the president and serves collectively as the executive and administrative arm of the president and of the state. A cabinet member can also be a member of the People's Council and, if so, is not answerable to the legislature for his official conduct while acting as a cabinet member.

As of 1987, the Council of Ministers had last been reshuffled in April 1985. The council was headed by Prime Minister Abd ar Rauf al Kassim, who had served as prime minister since 1980, and three deputy prime ministers, who also held the portfolios of defense, services, and economic affairs. Ministers were in charge of the following portfolios: agriculture and agrarian reform, communications, construction, culture and national guidance, defense, economy and foreign trade, education, electricity, finance, foreign affairs, health, higher education, housing and utilities, industry, information, interior, irrigation, justice, local administration, oil and mineral wealth, religious trusts (*waqfs*), social affairs and labor, supply and internal trade, tourism, and transportation. In addition, the Council of Ministers included ministers of state for cabinet affairs, foreign affairs, planning affairs, People's Council affairs, and presidential affairs and three newly elected ministers of state without portfolio.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

### **President - Bashar al-Assad**

Son of late president Hafez al-Assad, Bashar al-Assad was uninvolved in Syria politics until his elder brother and unofficial heir, Basel was killed in a car accident in 1994. Bashar had instead chosen a career in medicine and was studying to become an ophthalmologist in London when his father recalled him to Damascus after his brother's death. As a vast press campaign increased his popularity in Syria, Bashar underwent an accelerated grooming process to prepare him for the presidency. Graduating from the Military Academy in 1994 as a captain, Bashar made colonel by 1999 and had become

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increasingly involved in state affairs. Meanwhile, his father began to remove potential rivals and opponents, replacing them with Bashar loyalists.

With the death of his father on 10 June 2000, the Damascus establishment immediately began paving the way for Bashar's succession by amending the constitution so that the 34 year-old was eligible for the presidency, appointing him as commander of the armed forces and declaring him the ruling Ba'ath party presidential candidate (the only candidate). On 25 June, the Syrian parliament nominated him for the presidency and its choice was confirmed when Bashar won 97.2 per cent approval in a referendum. Amid speculation that he was too inexperienced to handle Syrian power politics, Bashar was sworn in as president on 17 July 2000, setting a precedent for hereditary republics in the Arab world.

<http://www4.janes.com>

**Note:** For a recent analysis of the Presidency of Bashar al-Assad, see article in Winter 2003 edition of *The Middle East Quarterly*. (<http://www.meforum.org/article/517>)

### **Prime Minister Muhammad Mustafa Miru**

Prime minister, Muhammad Mustafa Miru, is a well-known technocrat and member of the Central Committee of the ruling Ba'ath Party. Miru was born in the city of al-Tal, around 35 km north of Damascus. He obtained a degree in Arab Literature from Damascus University and was the secretary-general of the Arab Teachers' Union in Cairo during the 1970's, after which he obtained a PhD from a Soviet university (according to one report, this was the Arab Studies Institute in Moscow, but others have said that the university he attended was in Soviet Armenia). Miru served as governor of the of the southern province of Daraa from 1980 until 1986, when he was appointed governor of the northeastern province of al-Hasakah. Since 1993 he has served as governor of Aleppo province, earning a reputation for honesty and intolerance of corruption (like King Hussein of Jordan, following Haroun al-Rashid's example, Miru habitually traveled the streets in disguise to gauge his subjects true sentiments). He is married and has three daughters and two sons. Press reports in Syria have said that Miru is an expert on Syrian-Turkish relations.

[http://www.meib.org/articles/0003\\_s3.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0003_s3.htm)

#### **Cabinet**

##### **Vice President**

Abd al-Halim ibn Said Khaddam

##### **Vice President**

Muhammad Zuhayr Mashariqa

##### **Prime Minister**

Muhammad Mustafa Miru

##### **Deputy Prime Minister**

##### **Minister of Foreign Affairs**

Farouk al-Shara

##### **Deputy Prime Minister**

##### **Minister of Defense**

First Lt. Gen. Mustafa Talas

##### **Dep. Prime Min. for Economic Affairs**

Muhammad al-Husayn

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**Dep. Prime Min. for Services Affairs**  
Muhammad Najjutri

**Min. of Agriculture & Agrarian Reform**  
Nur-al-Din Muna

**Minister of Awqaf**  
Muhammad bin-abd-al-Rauf Ziyadah

**Minister of Building & Construction**  
Husam al-Aswad

**Minister of Communications**  
Bashir al-Munajjid

**Minister of Culture**  
Najat Qassab Hasan

**Minister of Economy & Foreign Trade**  
Ghassan al-Rifai

**Minister of Education**  
Mahmud al-Sayyid

**Minister of Electricity**  
Munib bin Asad Saim al-Dahar

**Minister of Finance**  
Muhammad al-Atrash

**Minister of Health**  
Dr. Muhammad Iyad al-Shatti

**Minister of Higher Education**  
Hassan Rishah

**Minister of Housing & Utilities**  
Ayman Wanli

**Minister of Industry**  
Issam al-Zaim

**Minister of Information**  
Adnan Umran

**Minister of Interior**  
Maj. Gen. Ali Hourri

**Minister of Irrigation**  
Muhammad Ridwan Martini

**Minister of Justice**  
Nabil al-Khatib

**Minister of Local Administration**  
Hilal al-Atrash

**Min. of Petroleum & Mineral Resources**  
Ibrahim Haddad

**Minister for Presidential Affairs**  
Haytham Duwayhi

**Minister of Social Affairs & Labor**  
Ghadah al-Jabi

**Minister of Supply & Internal Trade**  
Bassam Muhammad Rustum

**Minister of Telecommunications**  
Radwan Martini

**Minister of Tourism**  
Sadallah Agha al-Qalaa

**Minister of Transportation**  
Makram Ubayd

**Minister of State**  
Abd-al-Nasir Abd-al-Muti Dawud

**Minister of State**  
Faysal Jawish

**Minister of State**  
Abd-al-Karim Sayyid Yusuf

**Min. of State for Environmental Affairs**  
Adnan Khuzam

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**Minister of State for Expatriate  
Affairs**  
Nasir Qaddur

**Ambassador to the United States**  
Rostom al-Zoubi

**Governor, Central Bank**  
Hisham Mutawalli

**Permanent Representative to the UN**  
Mikhail Wahba

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/chiefs/chiefs171.html>

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## **B. Legislative Branch**

**Legislative branch:** unicameral People's Council or Majlis al-shaab (250 seats; members elected by popular vote to serve four-year terms)

*election results:* percent of vote by party - NPF 67%, independents 33%; seats by party - NPF 167, independents 83; note - the constitution guarantees that the Ba'th Party (part of the NPF alliance) receives one-half of the seats

*elections:* last held 2 – 3 March 2003

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

<http://www.electionworld.org/syria.htm>

The People's Council is the official name for the Syrian Parliament since 1970 and is situated in the capital, Damascus. The Council is constituted of 250 members, elected each 4 years. The Parliament was first established after the signing of the Franco-Syrian Treaty of 1936, according to which France recognized Syria's partial independence. On May 29, 1945, the Parliament buildings were attacked by French troops after growing opposition to the French military presence. In 1949, the parliament was abolished by military dictator Husni al-Zaim, it was reelected in 1954 and was abolished again in the period between 1959-1961 and 1963-1970 after the Baath Party revolution of March 8, 1963. After the Correction Movement, President Hafez al-Assad returned the Parliament back to work under the name of the 'People's Council'.

<http://www.damascus-online.com/se/SE-main.htm>

The members of the People's Council are elected for four-year terms by universal suffrage of citizens eighteen years of age or older in direct and secret ballot. The members, the number of which is determined by law, are chosen on the basis of singlemember electoral districts. The Constitution requires that at least half of the council seats be set aside for "workers and peasants." The 195 members of the People's Council serving in 1987 were elected in 1986.

The People's Council sits in three regular sessions annually and may be called into special session by the speaker, by the president, or at the request of one-third of the council members. The lawmakers are granted parliamentary immunity, and even when they are charged with criminal offenses, prior consent of the speaker is required before any prosecution against a member may proceed.



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People's Council Hall

The functions of the council include the nomination of a presidential candidate, enactment of laws, discussion of government policy, approval of the general budget and development plans, and ratification of treaties. In addition, as part of its monitoring of the executive branch, the People's Council is authorized to act on a motion of no-confidence in the Council of Ministers as a whole or in an individual minister. Such a motion must be initiated by at least one-fifth of the members and, to become effective, must be approved by the majority of the People's Council. If the motion is carried, the Council of Ministers or the individual minister concerned must resign. The president can dissolve the People's Council, although the Constitution does not specify grounds for dissolution. It does say that the council may not be dissolved more than once for the same cause.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

### **C. Judicial Branch**

**Judicial branch:** Supreme Constitutional Court (justices are appointed for four-year terms by the president); High Judicial Council; Court of Cassation; State Security Courts

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

In the 1980s, the Syrian judicial system remained a synthesis of Ottoman, French, and Islamic laws. The civil, commercial, and criminal codes in effect were, with some amendments, those promulgated in 1949 and were based primarily on French legal practices. In addition, special provisions sanctioned limited application of customary law among beduin and religious minorities. Islamic religious courts based on sharia (Muslim law) continued to function in some parts of the country, but their jurisdiction was limited to issues of personal status, such as marriage, divorce, paternity, custody of children, and inheritance. In 1955 a personal code pertaining to many aspects of personal status was developed. This law modified and modernized sharia by improving the status of women and clarifying the laws of inheritance.

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The High Judicial Council is composed of senior civil judges and is charged with the appointment, transfer, and dismissal of judges. Article 131 of the Constitution states that the independence of the judiciary is to be guaranteed by the president in his role as chairman of the High Judicial Council. Article 133 stipulates that judges be autonomous and subject to no authority other than the law. Although the concept of an independent judiciary is enshrined in the Constitution, the president clearly exercises considerable power in the execution, as well as the formulation, of law.

In 1987 Syria had a three-tiered court system, in addition to the state security courts. The Court of Cassation, sitting in Damascus, was the supreme court and the highest court of appeals. It had the authority to resolve both jurisdictional and judicial issues. Below the Court of Cassation were courts of appeal, and at the lowest level were courts of first instance, designated variously as magistrate courts, summary courts, and peace courts. Also at the basic level were juvenile and other special courts and an administrative tribunal known as the Council of State. Under the 1973 Constitution, the High Constitutional Court was established to adjudicate electoral disputes, to rule on the constitutionality of a law or decree challenged by the president or People's Council, and to render opinions on the constitutionality of bills, decrees, and regulations when requested to do so by the president. The High Constitutional Court is forbidden, however, to question the validity of the popularly approved "laws submitted by the President of the Republic to popular referendums." The court consists of the president and four judges he appoints to serve a renewable term of four years.

<http://lcweb2.loc.gov>

## 7. Political Parties

**Political parties and leaders:** National Progressive Front or NPF (includes the Ba'th Party, ASU, Arab Socialist Party, Socialist Unionist Democratic Party, ASP, SCP) [President Bashar al-ASAD, chairman]; Arab Socialist Renaissance (Ba'th) Party (governing party) [President Bashar al-ASAD, secretary general]; Syrian Arab Socialist Party or ASP [Safwan KOUDSI]; Syrian Communist Party or SCP [Yusuf FAYSAL]; Syrian Social National Party [Jubran URAYJI]

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 8. Political Pressure Groups

**Political pressure groups and leaders:** conservative religious leaders; Muslim Brotherhood (operates in exile in Jordan and Yemen); non-Ba'th parties have little effective political influence

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 9. International Organization Participation

**International** AEFSD AI AME CAEU CCC ESCWA FAO G 24 G 77 IAEA

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**organization participation:** IBRD, ICAO, ICC, ICRM, IDA, IDB, IFAD, IFC, IFRCS, IHO, ILO, IMF, IMO, Interpol, IOC, ISO, ITU, NAM, OEAPEC, OIC, UN, UN Security Council (temporary), UNCTAD, UNESCO, UNIDO, UNRWA, UPU, WFTU, WHO, WMO, WToO

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 10. Syrian Embassy in the United States

**Diplomatic representation in the US:** *chief of mission:* Ambassador Rustum al-ZU'BI  
*chancery:* 2215 Wyoming Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20008  
*FAX:* [1] (202) 234-9548  
*telephone:* [1] (202) 232-6313

### Flag description:



three equal horizontal bands of red (top), white, and black, with two small green five-pointed stars in a horizontal line centered in the white band; similar to the flag of Yemen, which has a plain white band, and of Iraq, which has three green stars (plus an Arabic inscription) in a horizontal line centered in the white band; also similar to the flag of Egypt, which has a heraldic eagle centered in the white band

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## 11. U.S. Diplomatic representation:

### Ambassador Theodore H. Kattouf

Theodore H. Kattouf was sworn in on August 31, 2001 as the Ambassador to the Syrian Republic. Ambassador Kattouf was born in Altoona, Pennsylvania in 1946. Upon graduating from the Pennsylvania State University, he served for three and one-half years in the U.S. Army infantry, attaining the rank of captain. He joined the Foreign Service in 1972. From 1973 to 1975, he served in Kuwait as an economic and commercial officer.

Following Kuwait, he attended the Foreign Service Arabic Language Program in Beirut and Tunis before being assigned as a political officer in Damascus. Mr. Kattouf then returned to the United States to serve as a Middle East analyst in the Bureau of Intelligence and Research. From 1980 to 1982, he worked as the International Relations Officer in the Near East Bureau. In 1982-1983, Ambassador Kattouf was a State Department mid-career fellow at Princeton University.

From 1983 to 1986, Mr. Kattouf served in Baghdad as Deputy Chief of Mission. He then served in Sanaa, one year as Deputy Chief of Mission, and one year as Charge d'Affaires, a.i. Mr. Kattouf returned to the United States in 1988 to serve as Deputy Director and subsequently Director of the Office of Arab North Affairs. In 1962, he returned overseas, first as Deputy Chief of Mission in Damascus, then as Deputy Chief of Mission in Riyadh, where he served from 1995 to 1998. President Clinton nominated Mr. Kattouf as Ambassador to the United Arab Emirates and was confirmed by the Senate in September

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1998. He was then nominated by President Bush to Syria and confirmed by the Senate in August 2001.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/biog/4897.htm>

## 12. Economy

**Economy - overview:** Syria's predominantly statist economy has been growing slower than its 2.5% annual population growth rate, causing a persistent decline in per capita GDP. President Bashar AL-ASAD has made little progress on the economic front after one year in office, but does appear willing to permit a gradual strengthening of the private sector. His most obvious accomplishment to this end was the recent passage of legislation allowing private banks to operate in Syria, although a private banking sector will take years and further government cooperation to develop. ASAD's recent cabinet reshuffle may improve his chances of implementing further growth-oriented policies, although external factors such as the international war on terrorism, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and downturn in oil prices could weaken the foreign investment and government revenues Syria needs to flourish. A long-run economic constraint is the pressure on water supplies caused by rapid population growth, industrial expansion, and increased water pollution.

**GDP:** purchasing power parity - \$54.2 billion (2001 est.)

**GDP - real growth rate:** 2% (2001 est.)

**GDP - per capita:** purchasing power parity - \$3,200 (2001 est.)

**GDP - composition by sector:** *agriculture: 27%*  
*industry: 23%*  
*services: 50% (2000 est.)*

**Population below poverty line:** 15%-25%

**Household income or consumption by percentage share:** *lowest 10%: NA%*  
*highest 10%: NA%*

**Inflation rate (consumer prices):** 0.3% (2001 est.)

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|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Labor force:</b>                        | 4.7 million (1998 est.)  |
| <b>Labor force - by occupation:</b>        | agriculture 40%, industry 20%, services 40% (1996 est.)  |
| <b>Unemployment rate:</b>                  | 20% (2000 est.)  |
| <b>Budget:</b>                             | <i>revenues:</i> \$5 billion<br><i>expenditures:</i> \$7 billion, including capital expenditures of \$NA (2001 est.) |
| <b>Industries:</b>                         | petroleum, textiles, food processing, beverages, tobacco, phosphate rock mining                                      |
| <b>Industrial production growth rate:</b>  | NA%  |
| <b>Electricity - production:</b>           | 19.7 billion kWh (2000)  |
| <b>Electricity - production by source:</b> | <i>fossil fuel:</i> 64%<br><i>hydro:</i> 36%<br><i>other:</i> 0% (2000)<br><i>nuclear:</i> 0%                        |
| <b>Electricity - consumption:</b>          | 17.671 billion kWh (2000)  |
| <b>Electricity - exports:</b>              | 650 million kWh (2000)   |
| <b>Electricity - imports:</b>              | 0 kWh (2000)   |
| <b>Agriculture - products:</b>             | wheat, barley, cotton, lentils, chickpeas, olives, sugar beets; beef, mutton, eggs, poultry, milk                    |
| <b>Exports:</b>                            | \$5 billion f.o.b. (2001 est.)   |
| <b>Exports - commodities:</b>              | crude oil 68%, textiles 7%, fruits and vegetables 6%, raw cotton 4% (1998 est.)                                      |
| <b>Exports - partners:</b>                 | Germany 27%, Italy 12%, France 10%, Turkey 10%, Saudi Arabia 7% (2000 est.)  |
| <b>Imports:</b>                            | \$4 billion f.o.b. (2001 est.)   |

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**Imports - commodities:** machinery and transport equipment 21%, food and livestock 18%, metal and metal products 15%, chemicals and chemical products 10% (2000 est.)

**Imports - partners:** Italy 9%, Germany 7%, France 5%, Lebanon 5%, China 4%, South Korea 4%, Turkey 4%, US 4% (2000 est.)

**Debt - external:** \$22 billion (2001 est.)

**Economic aid - recipient:** \$199 million (1997 est.)

**Currency:** Syrian pound (SYP)

**Currency code:** SYP

**Exchange rates:** Syrian pounds per US dollar - 51 (December 2001), 46 (2000), 46 (1998), 41.9 (January 1997)

**Fiscal year:** calendar year

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

### 13. Infrastructure

#### Communications

**Telephones - main lines in use:** 1.313 million (1997)

**Telephones - mobile cellular:** NA

**Telephone system:** *general assessment:* fair system currently undergoing significant improvement and digital upgrades, including fiber-optic technology  
*domestic:* coaxial cable and microwave radio relay network  
*international:* satellite earth stations - 1 Intelsat (Indian Ocean) and 1 Intersputnik (Atlantic Ocean region); 1 submarine cable; coaxial cable and microwave radio relay to Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, and Turkey; participant in Medarabtel

**Radio broadcast stations:** AM 14, FM 2, shortwave 1 (1998)

**Radios:** 4.15 million (1997)

**Television broadcast:** 44 (plus 17 repeaters) (1995)

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**stations:**

**Televisions:** 1.05 million (1997)

**Internet** .sy

**country code:**

**Internet Service** 1 (2000)

**Providers**

**(ISPs):**

**Internet users:** 60,000 (2002)

**Transportation**

**Railways:** *total:* 2,750 km  
*standard gauge:* 2,423 km 1.435-m gauge  
*note:* rail link between Syria and Iraq replaced in 2000 (2001)  
*narrow gauge:* 327 km 1.050-m gauge

**Highways:** *total:* 41,451 km  
*paved:* 9,575 km (including 877 km of expressways)  
*unpaved:* 31,876 km (1997)

**Waterways:** 870 km (minimal economic importance)

**Pipelines:** crude oil 1,304 km; petroleum products 515 km

**Ports and harbors:** Baniyas, Jablah, Latakia, Tartus

**Merchant marine:** *total:* 143 ships (1,000 GRT or over) totaling 482,985 GRT/702,590 DWT  
*note:* includes some foreign-owned ships registered here as a flag of convenience: Egypt 1, Greece 2, Italy 1, Lebanon 10 (2002 est.)  
*ships by type:* bulk 12, cargo 126, livestock carrier 4, roll on/roll off 1

**Airports:** 99 (2001)

**Airports - with paved runways:** *total:* 24  
*over 3,047 m:* 5  
*2,438 to 3,047 m:* 16  
*under 914 m:* 1 (2002)  
*914 to 1,523 m:* 2

**Airports - with unpaved runways:** *total:* 68  
*1,524 to 2,437 m:* 2  
*014 to 1 523 m:* 11

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*under 914 m: 55 (2002)*

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

## **14. Military**

### **A. Leadership**

#### **Minister for Defense: Lieutenant General Mustafa Tlass**

**Born:** Arrastan, province of Homs, 11 May 1932

Lieut Gen Mustafa Tlass finished his elementary and preparatory studies in Arrastan, in the Province of Homs, where he finished his secondary studies and obtained his Secondary School Certificate in 1951. He joined the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party at its foundation in 1947 and became an active member of the party from that date. He was appointed as the Secretary of the Arrastan Party Section in 1951.

In 1950-52 he was a teacher of physical education in the Alkraya School in the province of Assuwayda. On 1 November 1952 he joined the Military College, from where he graduated on 1 November 1954 as a Second Lieutenant in the armored branch. He served in a number of armored units and also at the Academy of Armor and he attended an Armored Platoon Commander's Course and Engineer Platoon Commander's Course.

He was moved to the Second Army in Cairo during the Egyptian and Syrian union where he served in Armored Units and he attended a Battalion Commander's Course and stayed there until the Act of Separation on 28 September 1961. In February 1962 he was assigned to the Ministry of Supply where he worked as an inspector.

Lieut Gen Tlass participated in the Free Officers Movement in Homs on 31 March 1962 and at Aleppo on 1 April 1962 where he was arrested together with some of his comrades and he was detained in the Al-Mezzeh Prison until the 8 March 1963 revolution. He was then immediately appointed as an Armored Battalion Commander in the Fifth Armored Brigade and Chief of the National Security Court in the Central Region where he was responsible for the party organization.

In February 1964 he was appointed as Commander of the Fifth Armored Brigade and, following a Staff and Command Course, was appointed as the Staff Armor Officer in the Armor Branch. In August 1965 he was elected as a member of the regional leadership of the Ba'ath Arab Socialist Party and was appointed as a member of the National Council of the Revolution in September of the same year. He participated in the 23 February movement, and was appointed as Commander of the Central Region and the Fifth Armored Brigade. In November 1966 he was additionally appointed as the President of the Emergency Military Court in Damascus.

During the June 1967 war with Israel he was appointed to command the Reserve of the General Headquarters, but was not involved in combat because of the cease-fire agreement on all three fronts. On 1968 he participated in most of the Arab military and political conferences and he was exceptionally promoted to the rank of Major General on 14 February 1968 and appointed as Deputy Minister of Defense and Chief of Staff of the Army and Armed Forces.



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He was elected as a member of the Regional Leadership in the Fourth Regional Conference at the end of September 1968 and was re-elected in the Fourth Extraordinary Conference in March 1969. Lieut Gen Tlass was elected as a member of the Party Politburo on 13 May 1969 during the joint meeting of the National and Regional Leaderships and he participated in the Rectification Movement led by Gen Hafez Assad on 16 November 1970.

<http://www4.janes.com>

For a more detailed biography, see July 1, 2000 edition of the *Middle East Intelligence Bulletin* ([http://www.meib.org/articles/0007\\_sd2.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0007_sd2.htm))

**ARMED FORCES CHIEF OF STAFF**  
**Lieutenant General Hassan Turkmani**

Born: 1935, Aleppo, Syria

**Service Career**

1954 - Joined the Army and attended the Military College

1978 - Promoted to Major General

1988 - Promoted to Lieutenant General

2002 - Appointed Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces

**AIR FORCES AND AIR DEFENCE FORCES COMMANDER**  
**Major General Ali Mahmoud**

Born: 1944, Lattakia

**Service Career**

1963 - Joined the Air Force

1965 - Graduated from the Military College

1994 - Promoted to Major General

1999 - Appointed Deputy Commander of Air Force and Air Defense

2000 - Appointed Commander of Air Force and Air Defense

**COMMANDER OF THE NAVY**  
**Major General Wael Nasser**

Family: Married

**Service Career**

1963 Joined the Naval school

1965-67 Attended seamanship course in Soviet Union Fought in the October war as commander of a squadron of missile boats.

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### **Courses**

Missile boat Commander's course  
Missile boat squadron Commander's course  
Naval battalion Commander's course  
Naval command and staff course  
Operations course

### **Command posts**

Commander of a Brigade of surface to surface missiles  
Chief of Staff of the Syrian Naval Forces  
Deputy Commander of the Syrian Naval Forces  
He studied for and graduated with a doctorate in military philosophy.

### **Medals and decorations**

Hero of the Republic for meritorious achievements in the October 1973 War  
Medal of War for being wounded in 1973 War  
Medal of Sincerity (Excellent Class)  
Medal of Courage (First Class)  
Medal of Training (four times)  
Order of Merit (First Class)

## **COMMANDER OF THE AIR AND AIR DEFENCE FORCES Major General Mohammad Kamal Mahmoud Mahfouz**

Family: Married with four children

### **Service Career:**

1960 - Joined the Air College  
1962 - Graduated as a Second Lieutenant pilot  
Maj Gen Mahfouz has attended a number of courses abroad to be trained to fly different types of aircraft and he has served in several command posts as the Commander of a combat squadron, Commander of an air brigade and Commander of a mixed air division. In these posts he has fought in the many wars against Israel.  
1988 - Promoted to the rank of Major General  
1993 - Appointed director of the Training Department in the AADF  
1994 - Appointed Chief of Staff of the AADF  
1999 - Appointed Commander of the AADF

### **Courses attended:**

A squadron commander's course.  
Air Staff Course  
Higher staff Course

### **Honors and awards:**

War decoration, 1st Class  
Medal of Bravery, 1st Class (twice: in the June war 1967 and the October War 1973)

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## **B. Armed Forces Overview**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>Military branches:</b>                                  | Syrian Arab Army, Syrian Arab Navy, Syrian Arab Air Force (includes Air Defense Forces), Police and Security Force |
| <b>Military manpower - military age:</b>                   | 19 years of age (2002 est.)  |
| <b>Military manpower - availability:</b>                   | <i>males age 15-49:</i> 4,550,496 (2002 est.)  |
| <b>Military manpower - fit for military service:</b>       | <i>males age 15-49:</i> 2,539,342 (2002 est.)  |
| <b>Military manpower - reaching military age annually:</b> | <i>males:</i> 200,859 (2002 est.)  |
| <b>Military expenditures - dollar figure:</b>              | \$921 million (FY00 est.); note - based on official budget data that may understate actual spending                |
| <b>Military expenditures - percent of GDP:</b>             | 5.9% (FY98)  |

<http://www.odci.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/sy.html>

### **Army**

Strength: 220,000e but figures fluctuate depending on mobilization status; 4,500 MBT; 800 × recce vehicles; 3,100 × AIFVs; 1,700 × APCs and 466 × self propelled artillery guns.

### **Navy**

Strength: 6,000e; 1 × submarine (possibly two more non-operational) 2 × frigates and about 15 × missile craft.

### **Air Force**

Strength: 40,000e with another 60,000e in the Air Defense Command; 450e × combat aircraft; 71 × combat helicopters.

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### **Defense Budget**

Defense spending accounts for an estimated 6 per cent of the 2001 Syrian budget, which was approved by the People's Assembly in late April 2001. The Damascus government publishes few details of the budget and nothing on politically sensitive defense allocations.

The 2001 defense budget has been set at US\$838 million, clearly a figure that is totally insufficient to fund armed forces of this size and complexity. At the very best a figure of US\$75 million could be allocated to army procurement expenditure from this figure.

<http://www4.janes.com>

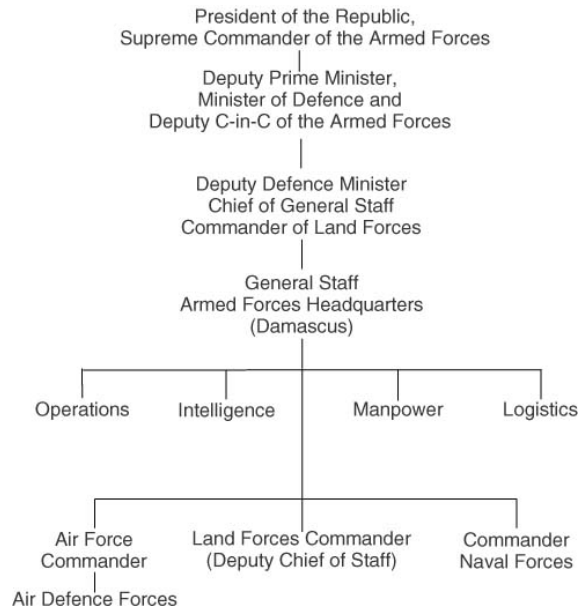
**Note:** See also: Cordesman: *Syrian Military Forces*; Center for Strategic and International Studies; 4/15/03 ([http://www.csis.org/features/syria\\_forcecapabilities.pdf](http://www.csis.org/features/syria_forcecapabilities.pdf))

### **C. Command and Control**

The core of the Syrian armed forces is centered on Damascus. The chain of command is headed by President Bashar al-Assad as head of state and Supreme Commander of the Syrian armed forces. Syria's combat element comprises two army corps that were reformed in 1985 to give the army more flexibility and to assume operational command of the 20,000 (current figure) men deployed in Lebanon. A third corps comprises mainly of reserve and training units.

There are serious gaps in the Syrian defense structure. Analysts have observed a recurrent theme: that any initiative or independent reaction to developing events is not tolerated by those in power. In several conflicts, the actions of Syrian commanders and the forces under them have been confined to the usual predetermined set pieces or tactics. Consequently, there is little versatility either in the implementation or execution phase of any military plan. Once an order is passed down the chain of command, it is carried out as a matter of course, regardless of any recent developments that might demand a revision or a change in plan. The mindset permeates the Syrian civil and military authority.

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### Command Changes

In April 2002 there was a regime shake-up in Syria designed to entrench the rule of President Bashar al-Assad's 'new guard', led by the new strongman Assef Shawkat. The shake-up started with a cabinet reshuffle in December 2001 that saw several old Ba'ath loyalists replaced by a new generation of technocrats. It was announced later in December that Mustafa Tlass, the long-serving defense minister and 'old guard' stalwart, would retire in July 2002. More recently, high-level officers in the security apparatus, including army and intelligence chiefs, have been replaced. A more extensive purging of the military is expected later in 2002. Assef Shawkat, Bashar's brother-in-law and deputy chief of military intelligence, is believed to be the driving force behind the restructuring. Although Shawkat is a member of the politically dominant Alawite sect, he is not from a powerful family; only his marriage to Bashar's sister Bushra secured him rapid promotion. Indeed, the late Hafez al-Assad saw that Shawkat, charming and ruthless but with no political base beyond the Assad family, would make an ideal right-hand man for the inexperienced Bashar. Shawkat now has loyalists placed in key positions at the expense of his enemies. The Syrian presidency has become a symbiotic relationship between the two with Bashar's lineage providing political legitimacy while Shawkat manages regime security.

<http://www4.janes.com>

### D. Army

#### ARMY SUMMARY

|   |
|---|
| <b>STRENGTH</b><br>300,000 (estimated)  |
| <b>INFANTRY</b><br>Mechanized division × 3<br>Special Forces division × 1<br>Independent infantry brigade × 4 |

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|   |
|---|
| Independent anti-tank brigade × 2<br>Independent Special Forces regiment × 10<br>Surface-to-surface missile brigade × 3 |
| <b>ARMOR</b><br>Armored division × 7<br>Republican Guard division × 1<br>Independent tank regiment × 1                  |
| <b>ARTILLERY</b><br>Regiment × 10<br>Republican Guard regiment × 1<br>Independent brigade × 2                           |

### Assessment

Since the conflicts with Israeli forces in 1973 and 1982 pointed out deficiencies in Syria's land forces, Syria has been seeking to build up the strength of the army, extend the order of battle by creating new combat units and improve equipment. It has made progress in all these areas, although problems have arisen along the way. Some analysts believe that training, especially armor training, has not kept pace with the expansion of the army, an expansion that included the creation of two new armored divisions. In terms of equipment, while the armor strength greatly increased in quality terms, there was not a similar improvement in artillery strength. Analysts also consider that manpower management is poor, that there is a lack of effective training and that the army is burdened by an inefficient support and logistics apparatus based on the Soviet model. Like the other services, the army has also been adversely affected by a lack of funds.

Syria has a very significant holding of main battle tanks (MBTs) and armored vehicles. There are more than 4,600 MBTs, but a sizeable proportion consists of obsolescent T-54/T-55s. There are about 2,000 of these, with more than 50 per cent of them in static positions or in storage. Syria has about 1,000 T-62s and more than 1,600 T-72s. Analysts consider that Syria acquired large numbers of T-72s to enhance the speed with which its armor could advance and maneuver, especially in a surprise attack on Israeli forces on the Golan. Syria sought in recent years to further enhance its armored forces by acquiring the T-80 from Russia but there is no confirmation of actual delivery.

Syria placed greater emphasis on enhancing the quality of its MBT fleet rather than on building up a modern force of other armored vehicles. During the 1980s Syria steadily and significantly increased the level of mechanization of the infantry combat forces. However, the quality of much of the equipment is not of the first order. The core of the armored infantry fighting vehicle (AIFV) fleet is a holding of about 2,200 BMP-1s - a design that goes back to the 1960s. The only relatively modern AIFVs in the fleet are about 100 BMP-2/3 vehicles. There are about 1,000 BTR-40/50/60 APCs but it is not known how many are still in service; there are about 560 BTR-152 APCs and 950 BRDM-2 reconnaissance vehicles. Syria has never acquired the over-all level of armor that Israel has acquired for its infantry and rear services elements.

There is a large holding of towed artillery weapons - more than 1,500 - and Syria has

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over the years built up the number of self-propelled weapons - there are about 400 120mm 2S1 and 50 152mm 2S3. Like most Soviet-equipped forces, the Syrian Army has a significant multiple-rocket launcher strength - there are about 200 107mm Type-63 and 280 122mm BM-21. Syria has placed an emphasis on improving its anti-tank warfare capability, again with an eye to engaging Israeli armor on the Golan. In the late 1990s Syria took delivery of 1,000 AT-14 Kornet anti-tank missiles.

<http://www4.janes.com>

### Chain of Command

The chief of General Staff functions through the Land Forces General Staff. The latter has an essentially administrative role and refers major decisions to the chiefs of staff.



<http://www4.janes.com>

### Organization

The Army Command is located in Damascus. The bulk of the forces controlled by the Army Command are organized into three army corps, composed mainly of seven armored divisions and three mechanized divisions. The two most important corps are the 1st and 2nd; the 3rd is the most recently formed and was set up to control a miscellaneous collection of units, including a reserve armored division. Estimates of the strength of the non-reserve forces have varied - Israeli experts who monitor Syria closely have estimated a figure in excess of 300,000, including conscripts. Each armored division consists of three armored brigades, one mechanized brigade and one artillery regiment. Each mechanized division consists of two armored brigades, two mechanized brigades and one artillery regiment.

The Army Command controls the elite Republican Guard Division, and a range of other formations, including two independent artillery brigades; two independent anti-tank brigades, and an independent tank regiment. There is a Border Brigade and a Surface-to-Surface Missile (SSM) Brigade. There are sizeable reserve forces with a strength of nearly 300,000. They are organized into two motorized divisions, more than two dozen infantry brigades and a range of other reserve units. It is uncertain how many of these units are combat effective.

Mindful of the comparative success of Syrian commandos during the 1973 war, and in preparation for special operations against Israeli forces on the Golan, Syria places a particular emphasis on special forces. There is a Special Forces (SF) Command in Damascus, responsible for the 14th SF Division which controls four SF regiments - the

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1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Some elements are deployed in Lebanon; others have a special focus on the Golan Heights. There are up to 10 independent SF regiments and it is understood that they come under the control of a Special Forces HQ based at al-Qutayfeh, about 25 miles northeast of Damascus; the commander is Major General Ali Habib, who formerly commanded the 7th Mech Div. Elements of some units have a particular focus on protecting the approaches to Damascus. One regiment, Al Sa'iqa, specializes in counter-terrorism and a range of other special operations roles, with training provided by Russian Spetsnaz personnel. Special Forces have a particular role in internal security.

The Palestine Liberation Army (PLA) based in Syria comprises two brigades and comes under Syrian military control. Some elements of the PLA are reported to be deployed with Syrian forces in the Bekaa region of Lebanon and in the Tripoli area of north Lebanon. The PLA, which has Syrian officers and advisers, is said to number about 4,500 men. It is equipped with about 100 T-54/T-55 tanks, as well as multiple rocket launchers, AT-3 anti-tank guided missiles and Strela-2 (SA-7) light surface-to-air missiles. Artillery includes 105mm, 122mm and 152mm weapons.

<http://www4.janes.com>

### **Role and Deployment**

The role of the army, organized into three corps, is to guard Syria's borders, defend the national territory and regain possession of the Golan Heights seized by Israel. For the purposes of local defense, administration and the control of reserves, Syria is divided into seven military regions - Damascus, North, East, South, Southwest, Coastal and Central. There is a regional command for each region. There is also a Syrian forces command in Lebanon that takes units mainly from the 2nd Corps.

The Syrian regular army forces are organized as follows:

#### **1<sup>st</sup> Corps**

The 1st Corps has its HQ at Damascus and its formations are deployed in the south of the country facing Israel. There is also a focus on the border with Jordan. The 1st Corps controls four armored divisions, designated the 5th, 6th, 8th and 9th; there is one mechanized division, the 7th. The 1st Corps maintains particularly strong defensive positions on the Golan Heights, facing across a demilitarized zone towards the heavily-fortified Israeli-held sector. The Syrian positions have been progressively strengthened since the early 1980s. Forces deployed here include a number of independent special forces regiments, which have units trained specially for operations against Israeli positions on the Golan, especially surveillance posts on Mount Hermon. The 9th Armd Div served in Saudi Arabia during the 1991 Gulf War.

The divisions and the brigades they control are as follows:

5th Armd Div (17th, 96th Armd Bdes; 112th Mech Bde)

6th Armd Div (12, 98th Armd Bdes; 11th Mech Bde)

8th Armd Div (62nd, 65th Armd Bdes; 32nd Mech Bde)



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9th Armd Div (43rd, 91st Armd Bdes; 52nd Mech Bde)  
7th Mech Div (58th, 68th Armd Bdes; 78th Mech Bde)

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Corps**

The 2nd Corps has its HQ at Zabadani, near the border with Lebanon. It deploys units within Lebanon and covers the outskirts of Damascus and the region northwards to Homs. The corps is believed to comprise three armored divisions, the 1st, 3rd and 11th, and two mechanized divisions, the 4th and the 10th. Part of the role of the 2nd Corps is to protect the capital and to guard the regime from any hostile action by dissident military units - the 3rd Armd Div is one of the key units charged with the defiance of Damascus. It is commanded by Gen Shafiq Fayyad, a cousin of the late President Assad.

The divisions and the brigades they control are as follows:

1st Armd Div (44th, 46th Armd Bdes; 42nd Mech Bde)  
3rd Armd Div (47th, 82nd Armd Bdes; 132nd Mech Bde)  
11th Armd Div (60th, 67th Armd Bdes; 87th Mech Bde)  
4th Mech Div (1st Armd Bde; 61st, 89th Mech Bdes)  
10th Mech Div (51st, 85th Armd Bdes; 123rd Mech Bde)

### **Forces in Lebanon**

The 10th Mechanized Division is one of the major formations deployed in Lebanon. Its HQ is at Chtaura, at the eastern end of the strategic Bekaa Valley, and one of its roles is to protect the important Beirut-Damascus highway. The 3rd and 11th Armored Divisions also deploy a number of brigades in Lebanon. Elements of a number of Special Forces regiments are also based in Lebanon. Syrian troops in Lebanon are estimated to have a strength of about 20,000. They are commanded by General Ibrahim Al Safi. President Assad's 'viceroy' in Lebanon is the deputy chief of Syrian Military Intelligence, General Ghazi Kenaan, who is based at Anjar in the Bekaa Valley.

It was reported in April 2002 that, amid rising tension with Israel, Syria was pulling its forces from around Beirut and heavily populated central Lebanon to the east of the country, near the border with Syria.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Corps**

The 3rd Corps is the most recently formed; its HQ is at Aleppo, and it covers the north of the country, including the regions bordering Turkey and Iraq. The main formation coming under the control of the 3rd Corps is the 2nd Reserve Armored Division; in addition there is a mix of independent armored and infantry units and a special forces regiment. The Coastal Defense Brigade (CDB) comes under the ambit of the 3rd Corps, but appears to operate essentially under naval command. The CDB is responsible for four missile battalions, one based at Latakia where the brigade has its HQ in the local naval base; the other three battalions are at Baniyas, Hamidieh and Tartous. Each battalion deploys batteries equipped with SS-C-1B Sepal and SS-C-3 Styx surface-to-surface missiles. Other units under the control of the CDB include two infantry brigades, an observation battalion and two artillery battalions whose equipment includes anti-aircraft guns.

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### **Syrian forces on the Golan**

When one takes into account the concentration of Syrian forces in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon and the concentration of forces in the Golan area, it is clear that the bulk of Syrian land forces are focused on, or are facing towards, Israel. There is also a focus on the border with Jordan but the biggest concentration of Syrian forces is in the Golan. The forces in the Golan occupy fortified positions facing across a UN-controlled buffer zone towards the Israeli-occupied sector, where Israel normally deploys at least two armored brigades.

It is believed that Syria has deployed its forces up to the limit set by the UN-sponsored agreement made following the 1973 ceasefire. This agreement permits 6,000 troops, 75 tanks and 36 artillery weapons (of 122mm caliber maximum) to be deployed within 10km of the UN-controlled area of separation between the two sides. In the zone 10-20km from the demarcation line, 450 tanks and 163 artillery weapons are permitted, although there is no limit on troop numbers. Syria has built up three major lines of defense to stop any Israeli push from the Golan towards Damascus. The first line, just 10km from the demarcation line, features earthworks, gun emplacements and minefields. There are also anti-tank obstacles creating 'kill zones' in which advancing hostile armor can be eliminated. Syria has also built up its air defenses in the region and it is believed that 'Scud' missile sites have been established in underground bunkers at points from which Israeli forces on the Golan would be within easy range.

Satellite photographs suggest that there are underground 'Scud' sites near the Syrian city of Sanamein, about 30km east of the demarcation line. In order to reinforce the security of the regime and protect the capital from any hostile action by dissident military units, two trusted armored divisions, the 3rd and the 4th, are deployed on the outskirts of Damascus. The 3rd Arm'd Div has been commanded for many years by General Shafiq Fayyad, a cousin of the late President Hafez al-Assad. Units of this division played a key role in the suppression of Islamic dissident activity in the Aleppo area in the early 1980s. They were also among the units deployed in 1984 to block an abortive attempt by Hafez al-Assad's dissident brother Rifaat and his Defense Companies to seize control of Damascus. The 4th Armored Division is a relatively new formation which evolved from Rifaat al-Assad's Defense Companies. However, steps have been taken to ensure that the division is entirely loyal to the regime. The division is commanded by Brigadier General Hikmat Ibrahim, an Alawite close to the Assad family.

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#### **Inventory: Armor**

| <i>Type</i> | <i>Role</i>               | <i>Quantity</i>      | <i>In Service</i>    |
|-------------|---------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| T-72/T-72M  | Main Battle Tank          | 1,500 <sup>(1)</sup> | 1,500 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| T-62        | Main Battle Tank          | 1,000                | 1,000                |
| T-54/T-55   | Main Battle Tank          | 2,250 <sup>(2)</sup> | n/a                  |
| BRDM-2      | Reconnaissance Vehicle    | 950                  | 950                  |
| BMP-2       | Infantry Fighting Vehicle | 60                   | 60                   |

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|              |                           |       |       |
|--------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| BMP-1        | Infantry Fighting Vehicle | 2,300 | 2,300 |
| BTR-152      | Armored Personnel Carrier | 560   | n/a   |
| BTR-40/50/60 | Armored Personnel Carrier | 1,000 | n/a   |

**Notes:**

1. Syria may have as many as 1,600 T-72 MBTs.
2. Estimated.

Syria has invested heavily in its armor. It has more than 4,000 main battle tanks (MBTs), although more than half of these are ageing T-54/T-55 vehicles. Analysts believe that one of the reasons behind the purchase of the modern T-72 was to give Syrian forces the speed and maneuverability that would be required were they to move against Israeli forces on the Golan Heights.

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**Inventory: Artillery**

| <i>Type</i>         | <i>Role</i>                       | <i>Quantity</i>    | <i>In Service</i>  |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 152 mm M-1972 (2S3) | Self-Propelled Howitzer           | 50                 | 50                 |
| 122 mm 2S1          | Self-Propelled Howitzer           | 400                | 400                |
| 122 mm D-30         | Self-Propelled Gun <sup>(1)</sup> | 36                 | 36                 |
| 180 mm S23          | Gun (Towed)                       | 10                 | 10                 |
| 152 mm M-1937       | Gun (Towed)                       | 50                 | 50                 |
| 130 mm M-46         | Gun (Towed)                       | 750                | 750                |
| 122 mm D-30         | Howitzer (Towed)                  | 480                | 480                |
| 122 mm M1938        | Howitzer (Towed)                  | 150                | 150                |
| 122 mm M1931/1937   | Howitzer (Towed)                  | 100                | n/a                |
| 122 mm BM-21        | Multiple Rocket System            | 300 <sup>(2)</sup> | 300 <sup>(2)</sup> |
| 107 mm Type 63      | Multiple Rocket System            | 200 <sup>(2)</sup> | 200 <sup>(2)</sup> |
| 240 mm M240         | Heavy Mortar                      | 10 <sup>(2)</sup>  | 10 <sup>(2)</sup>  |
| 160 mm M160         | Heavy Mortar                      | 100                | 100                |
| 120 mm M1943        | Heavy Mortar                      | 400                | 400                |
| 82 mm               | Mortar                            | 200 <sup>(2)</sup> | 200 <sup>(2)</sup> |

**Notes:**

1. Mounted on T-34 chassis.
2. Estimated.

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**Inventory: Anti-Tank Weapons**

| <i>Type</i> | <i>Role</i>              | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>In Service</i> |
|-------------|--------------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| MILAN       | Anti-Tank Guided Missile | 200             | 200               |

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|                 |                          |       |                      |
|-----------------|--------------------------|-------|----------------------|
| AT-3 `Sagger'   | Anti-Tank Guided Missile | 3,000 | 3,000                |
| AT-4 `Spigot'   | Anti-Tank Guided Missile | 150   | 150                  |
| AT-5 `Spandrel' | Anti-Tank Guided Missile | 40    | 40                   |
| AT -14 `Kornet' | Anti-Tank Guided Missile | 1,000 | 1,000 <sup>(1)</sup> |

**Note:** 1 It was reported in June 1998 that Russia had sold Syria 1,000 AT-14 `Kornet' anti-tank guided missiles. There was some concern in Israel about the reports. While Israel's Merkava MBT was designed to defeat the threat of such missiles, there was concern that the AT-14 could be effective against fortified positions or medium protected vehicles in areas such as southern Lebanon or the Golan Heights.

Syria remains heavily dependent on Soviet-designed anti-tank weapons. It has been seeking to acquire advanced Western-designed weapons that are easier to use.

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### Inventory: Air Defense Weapons

| <i>Type</i>               | <i>Role</i>                     | <i>Quantity</i>    | <i>In Service</i>  |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Strela-2 (SA-7)           | Manportable SAM                 | 4,000              | 4,000              |
| Strela-3 (SA-14)          | Manportable SAM                 | n/a                | n/a                |
| Igla-1 (SA-16)            | Manportable SAM                 | n/a                | n/a                |
| 2K12 Kub/9K33 (SA-6/SA-8) | Low Altitude SAM                | 70 <sup>(1)</sup>  | 70 <sup>(1)</sup>  |
| 9K31 Strela-1 (SA-9)      | Low Altitude SAM                | 20                 | 20                 |
| 9K35 Strela 10 (SA-13)    | Low Altitude SAM                | 35                 | 35                 |
| 100 mm KS-19              | Anti-Aircraft Gun               | 25                 | 25                 |
| 57 mm S-60                | Anti-Aircraft Gun               | 700 <sup>(1)</sup> | 700 <sup>(1)</sup> |
| 57 mm ZSU-57-2 SP         | Self-Propelled AAG              | 10                 | 10                 |
| 37 mm M1939               | Anti-Aircraft Gun               | 300                | n/a                |
| 23 mm ZSU-23-4 SP         | Self-Propelled AAG              | 400                | 400                |
| 23 mm ZU-23-2             | Light Anti-Aircraft Gun (Towed) | 650                | 650                |

**Note:** 1. Estimated. The army has more than 2,000 air defence guns and more than 4,100 surface-to-air missiles. In this as in other areas, the army is heavily dependent on Soviet-designed weapons. The Air Defense Command, which operates under the command of the air force, operates longer-range surface-to-air missiles such as the Almaz Volga-M (SA-2), S-125 Neva (SA-3) and Antey S-200 (SA-5).

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### Inventory: Infantry Weapons

| <i>Type</i>               | <i>Role</i> |
|---------------------------|-------------|
| 7.62 × 25 mm TT33 Tokarev | Pistol      |
| 7.65 mm MAS-1935S         | Pistol      |

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|   |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 7.65 mm SACM-1935A  | Pistol                      |
| 9 × 18 mm Makarov   | Pistol                      |
| 9 × 19 mm Parabellum (FN Mle. 35 GP)  | Pistol                      |
| Enfield No 2 Mk 1 .38   | Revolver                    |
| Webley No 1 Mk VI .455  | Revolver                    |
| Webley Mk IV .38  | Revolver                    |
| 9 × 29 mm (.38 Smith and Wesson)  | Revolver                    |
| 7.62 × 51 mm Steyr SSG  | Sniper Rifle                |
| 7.62 × 39 mm AK-47  | Assault Rifle               |
| 7.62 × 39 mm AKM  | Assault Rifle               |
| 7.62 × 51 mm FN FAL   | Assault Rifle               |
| 9 × 19 mm Parabellum vz.23 and vz.25  | Sub-Machine Gun             |
| 7.62 mm PPS-43 Tokarev  | Sub-Machine Gun             |
| 7.62 mm PPSH-41 Tokarev   | Sub-Machine Gun             |
| 7.62 × 39 mm RPK  | Light Machine Gun           |
| 7.62 × 54 mm,   | General-Purpose Machine Gun |
| PK series 7.62 × 54 mm SGM Vehicle MGs  | Machine Gun                 |
| 7.62 × 54 mm DT vehicle MGs   | Machine Gun                 |
| 12.7 × 108 mm DShK38/46   | Heavy Machine Gun           |
| 14.5 x 114 mm KPV HMG (ZPU-1, ZPU-2 and ZPU-4)                                | Automatic Cannon            |
| 23 × 152 mm: ZU-23  | Automatic Cannon            |
| <b>Note:</b> Soviet-designed weapons predominate in the small arms inventory. |                             |

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## **E. Air Force**

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**Syria: Air Force**



Fuselage marking



Fin marking

Notes

- 1 The black outline of the flag is only to illustrate the shape.

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### AIR FORCE SUMMARY

**STRENGTH**

40,000 (Estimated - Air Force)

60,000 (Estimated - Air Defense Command)

**FIGHTER**

MiG-23; MiG-25; MiG-29; Su-27

**CLOSE SUPPORT**

MiG-21; MiG-23; Su-20; Su-22; Su-24

**TRANSPORT**

An-24; An-26; Il-76; Tu-134; Yak-40

### Assessment

The Syrian Arab Air Force (SAAF) has about 600 combat aircraft but questions have been raised as to how many are actually operational. Many are elderly and increasingly difficult to maintain, and such factors have had an adverse effect on the force's capabilities. The SAAF operates according to Soviet methods and concepts. Equipment is mainly of Soviet design, consisting primarily of low-grade export versions of Soviet fighters and air-to-air missiles. There is a significant number of increasingly antiquated MiG-21 fighter aircraft, which would be little match for Israel's advanced F-15 and F-16 aircraft.

Bearing in mind these shortcomings, Syria has been eager to improve its capability by acquiring advanced new aircraft. After years of speculation, it appears that Syria may finally have begun to take delivery of the sophisticated Su-27 'Flanker' fighter - at least four were understood to have entered service in 2000 with 826 Squadron, which was forming at Quasayr Air Base (AB), with a dozen more to complete deliveries. Syria has

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also been seeking to acquire MiG-29SMT fighters; there was an unconfirmed report that 14 were delivered at the end of 2000. The SAAF already has more than 40 MiG-29A/UB 'Fulcrum' interceptors, deployed with three squadrons at Sayqal AB. Other interceptor assets include 30 MiG25PD 'Foxbat' deployed with two squadrons at Tivas AB.

The SAAF suffered major losses in aerial engagements with Israeli aircraft in the 1967 and 1973 wars, and again during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The SAAF suffered a further setback with the collapse of the Soviet Union, which disrupted the flow of equipment. Nevertheless, despite its shortcomings in terms of a scarcity of spare parts, unwieldy battle management structures and a lack of some of the more advanced technological systems, the air force is still capable of making a lethal strike against Israel. Syria has sufficient numbers of aircraft to stage a mass attack on its neighbor and there are fears that such an onslaught could tie up and saturate Israel's air defenses, allowing Syria's fleet of Su-24 bombers to strike strategic targets. The Syrians could only mount such an aerial offensive at enormous cost to themselves - nevertheless Israel could also suffer grievously if the Syrians deployed unconventional weapons.

### **Air Defense**

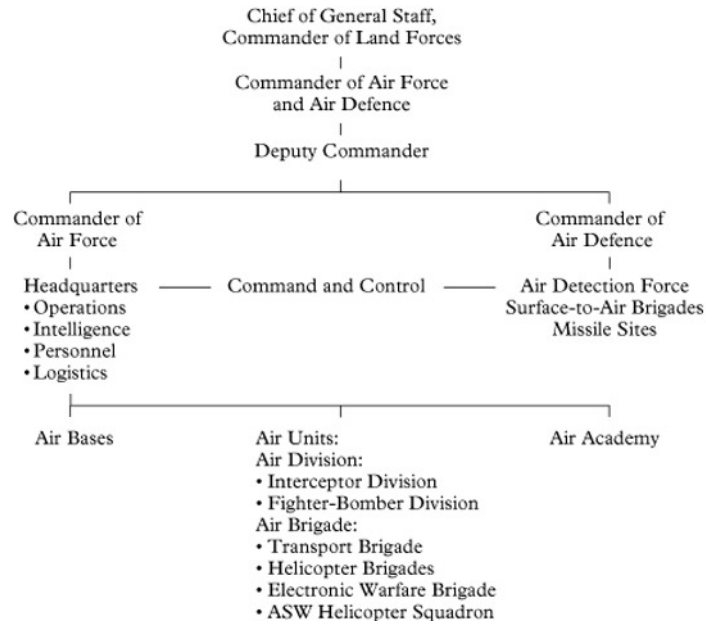
Syria has one of the most sophisticated Soviet-designed air defense systems outside of the former Eastern Bloc countries. However, it is not up to the standard of the most advanced air defense and sensor systems developed by the Soviets. The Syrian system appears to be flawed and some analysts doubt the reliability and efficiency of the computer-controlled network. Israeli sources claimed in recent years that parts of the computerized system sometimes failed to function and then had to be operated manually. The sources claimed that Israel could neutralize Syria's air defense system in 48 hours. <http://www4.janes.com>

### **Operational Art and Tactical Doctrine**

Operational art and tactical doctrine follow the Soviet model. Syria sees two main combat roles for its attack helicopters - close support and as roving tank killers. Syria used its SA 342L Gazelles armed with HOT anti-tank missiles in the latter role with some success during the conflict with Israel in 1982. The helicopters destroyed a number of Israeli armored vehicles when sent out in pairs on 'hunting' missions. However, coordination with ground forces was poor and some helicopter crews did not receive adequate tactical briefings before take-off. Overall, the Syrians lost 14 Gazelles during the conflict, some of which were shot down by Israeli tanks. Since then, Syria has been steadily building up the number of Gazelles in its fleet. <http://www4.janes.com>

### **Chain of Command**

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### Organization

The Syrian Arab Air Force (SAAF) has an estimated 25 combat squadrons, 17 in the interceptor role and the remainder in the air defense/attack role. The air force strength is about 40,000.

There are at least eight fighter-bomber squadrons equipped with MiG-21PF/MF/bis, operating from Hamah, Khalkalah, Tabqa, Deir ez Sor, Jirah and Quasayr. There are more than 220 of these aircraft - how many are operational is questionable.

There are four attack squadrons equipped with approximately 60 Su-20/22 'Fitter' aircraft (located at Dumayr, Shayrat, Tivas). A number of attack squadrons are equipped with MiG-23BN.

There are three interceptor squadrons equipped with more than 40 MiG-29A/UB 'Fulcrum' fighters, deployed at Sayqal AB. Other interceptor assets include two squadrons equipped with 30 MiG25PD 'Foxbat' aircraft deployed with two squadrons at Tivas AB. There are at least three interceptor squadrons equipped with MiG-23MF/MS/MLs.

There is a squadron of Su-24MK bombers deployed at Tivas AB. In addition to the above squadrons, it was understood that a squadron, Sq 826 was being formed at Quasayr AB to deploy the Su-27 'Flanker' multirole fighter. At least four were understood to have entered service in 2000, with a dozen more to complete deliveries.

| <i>SAAF Missiles</i> |   |
|----------------------|---|
| Air-to-air           | AA-2 'Atoll'<br>AA-6 'Acrid'<br>AA-7 'Apex' |



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|                |  |
|----------------|--|
|                | AA-8 `Aphid'<br>AA-10 `Alamo'  |
| Air-to-surface | AS-7 `Kerry'<br>AS-9 `Kyle'<br>AS-11 `Kilter'<br>AS-12 `Kegler'<br>AS-14 `Kedge'<br>AT-2 `Swatter' |
| Anti-armor     | Euromissile HOT  |

### Air Defense

Syria places much emphasis on its land-based air defenses. The Air Defense Command (ADC) has a strength of about 60,000 and controls two anti-aircraft divisions, (AADs), the 24th and the 26th AAD, comprising a total of 25 air defense brigades operating an estimated 130 surface-to-air missile batteries. Most are equipped with SA-2/SA-3 surface-to-air missiles (SAMs); eight batteries are equipped with SA-5 SAMs. In addition, a significant number of SA-6 mobile launchers are deployed, as well as an estimated 4,000 anti-aircraft guns of up to 100mm.

During 2001 there was a report indicating that Syria may have taken delivery of the sophisticated Almaz S-300 `Grumble' (SA-10) SAM system, which it had been seeking to acquire from Russia for some time. This report could not be confirmed. Nevertheless, there was a further report that Syria had formed two independent Air Defense Regiments to deploy S-300 and SA-8 mobile SAMs. Again, this could not be confirmed. If the report was correct, it was presumed that SA-8, a `point defense' weapon, was being deployed to protect the S-300. Israeli sources claimed in summer, 2001 that their air force had developed counter-measures against the S-300.

Syria extensively re-organized its air defense network following the drastic aircraft losses it suffered as a result of Israel's air superiority during the latter's invasion of Lebanon in 1982. The network was re-structured on the basis of a Soviet-supplied command and control system, with three computerized air defense centers coordinating missile batteries and interceptor fighters. Major improvements were made to radar systems, electronic warfare capabilities and the level of integration of the air defense forces generally. Nevertheless, the system is considered to pose only a limited threat to Israeli air superiority, and would be vulnerable to the kind of countermeasures available to advanced, US-designed Israeli aircraft.

There is a particular priority given to the anti-aircraft defense detection network covering Lebanon and Israel but Syria has also been expanding its air defense resources in the northeast, so as to be prepared for any attack from Iraq or an attack on its rear by Israel. Syria has taken advantage of its military presence in Lebanon to site air defense radar installations there.

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### Role and Deployment

The role of the air force is to maintain control over Syrian airspace and to ensure its defence against threats from Israel. Among the more important combat bases are Dumayr, Hama, Khalkalah, Sayqal, Shayrat and Tiyas.

| <i>Base</i>       | <i>Unit</i>  | <i>Aircraft Type</i>   | <i>Role</i>   |
|-------------------|--|--|---|
| Abu a-Duhor AB    | Squadron<br>2 Squadron<br>678 Squadron   | L-39<br>L-39<br>MiG-23MS   | Armed Trainer<br>Armed Trainer<br>Interceptor   |
| Afis AB           | 253 Squadron<br>255 Squadron   | Mi-8<br>Mi-8   | Assault Helicopter<br>Assault Helicopter  |
| An Nasiriya AB    | 695 Squadron<br>698 Squadron   | MiG-23<br>MiG-23   | Air Defense/Attack<br>Air Defense/Attack  |
| Damascus-Mezze AB | Squadron<br>522 Squadron<br>565 Squadron<br>575 Squadron<br>577 Squadron<br>585 Squadron<br>909 Squadron<br>976 Squadron | Mi-8<br>An-24/26, Il-76<br>Jak-40<br>Falcon 20<br>SA.342L<br>Tu-134<br>Mi-8<br>SA.342L | Transport Helicopter<br>Transport<br>VIP Transport<br>Communications<br>Combat Helicopter<br>Transport<br>Transport Helicopter<br>Combat Helicopter |
| Deir ez Zor AB    | 8 Squadron   | MiG-21MF/UM  | Air Defense/Attack  |
| Dumayr AB         | 9 Squadron<br>Squadron<br>Squadron   | MiG-25RB/PU<br>Su-22, Su-20<br>MiG-23  | Reconnaissance<br>Attack<br>Air Defense/Attack  |
| Hamah AB          | 679 Squadron<br>680 Squadron   | MiG-21MF/UM<br>MiG-21MF/UM   | Air Defense/Attack<br>Air Defense/Attack  |
| Jirah AB          | 10 Squadron  | MiG-21PF/MF/U  | Air Defense/Attack  |
| Khalkalah AB      | 945 Squadron<br>946 Squadron   | MiG-21bis<br>MiG-21bis   | Air Defense/Attack<br>Air Defense/Attack  |
| Latakia AB        | 618 Squadron   | Ka-25, Mi-14   | Maritime<br>Patrol/ASW  |
| Marj as Sultan AB | 525 Squadron<br>537 Squadron   | Mi-8<br>Mi-8   | Assault Helicopter<br>Assault Helicopter  |
| Marj Ruhayyil AB  | 54 Squadron<br>77 Squadron<br>767 Squadron   | MiG-23<br>MiG-23<br>Mi-24  | Air Defense/Attack<br>Air Defense/Attack<br>Combat Helicopter   |
| Minakh AB MB-223, | Squadrons × 4  | MB-223, Mi-8   | Training  |
| Neirab AB         | Squadron<br>Squadron<br>Squadron<br>Squadron<br>Squadron   | Mi-8<br>Mi-8<br>L-29<br>L-29<br>L-29   | Transport<br>Transport<br>Trainer<br>Trainer<br>Trainer   |

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|                   |  |   |  |
|-------------------|--|---|--|
|                   | Squadron<br>Squadron                                       | L-39<br>L-39  | Armed Trainer<br>Armed Trainer                 |
| Quabr as Sitt AB  | 532 Squadron   | Mi-8, Mi-2  | Assault/Utility<br>Helicopter                  |
| Quasayr AB        | 825 Squadron<br>826 Squadron <sup>(1)</sup>                | MiG-21bis/UM<br>Su-27                               | Air Defense/Attack<br>Multirole                |
| Rasin el About AB | Squadrons × 3  | MB-223, L-29  | Training                                       |
| Sayqal AB         | 697 Squadron<br>699 Squadron<br>Squadron                   | MiG-29<br>MiG-29<br>MiG-29                          | Interceptor<br>Interceptor<br>Interceptor      |
| Shayrat AB        | 7 Squadron<br>675 Squadron<br>677 Squadron<br>685 Squadron | MiG-25PD/PU<br>MiG-23MF/UM<br>Su-22, Su-20<br>Su-22 | Interceptor<br>Interceptor<br>Attack<br>Attack |
| Tabqa AB          | 12 Squadron<br>Squadron                                    | MiG-21MF/UM<br>Mi-8                                 | Air Defense/Attack<br>Assault Helicopter       |
| Tiyas AB          | 1 Squadron<br>5 Squadron<br>819 Squadron<br>827 Squadron   | MiG-25PD/PU<br>MiG-25PD/PU<br>Su-24MK<br>Su-22      | Interceptor<br>Interceptor<br>Bomber<br>Attack |

**Note:**

1. It is understood that Sq 826 has been in the course of formation to deploy new Su-27 aircraft. It was reported that four of the aircraft were delivered in 2000.

### Air Defense Command

The role of the Air Defense Command is to detect and warn of any air attack from Israel, Iraq or any other potential enemy, and to co-ordinate the response by interceptor fighters and its own surface-to-air missile batteries. The Air Defense Command also liaises with the surface-to-air units of the land forces. Syria has taken advantage of its military presence in Lebanon to site radar installations in that country. The largest Syrian radar installation on Lebanese soil was at Dahr al-Baidar, a strategic 1,829m peak beside the Damascus highway, 32km east of Beirut. In April 2001 the station suffered heavy damage from strikes by Israeli aircraft, in retaliation for attacks on Israeli troops by the Syrian-supported Lebanese Islamic guerrilla group, Hizbullah.

<http://www4.janes.com>

### Inventory: Fixed-Wing

| Type            | Role               | Quantity          | In Service |
|-----------------|--------------------|-------------------|------------|
| MiG-23MF/MS/ML  | Interceptor        | 80                | 80         |
| MiG-25PD        | Interceptor        | 30                | 30         |
| MiG-29          | Interceptor        | 42                | 42         |
| Su-27           | Air Defense/Attack | 14 <sup>(1)</sup> | 4+         |
| MiG-21PF/MF/bis | Air Defense/Attack | 225               | 225        |

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|                    |                 |    |    |
|--------------------|-----------------|----|----|
| MiG-23BN           | Attack          | 60 | 60 |
| Su-20              | Attack          | 20 | 20 |
| Su-22M-2           | Attack          | 34 | 34 |
| Su-24MK            | Attack          | 20 | 20 |
| MiG-25RB           | Reconnaissance  | 8  | 8  |
| An-24              | Transport       | 1  | 1  |
| An-26/26B          | Transport       | 4  | 4  |
| Il-76M/T           | Transport       | 4  | 4  |
| Tu-134B-3          | Transport       | 2  | 2  |
| Yak-40             | Transport       | 6  | 6  |
| Falcon 20F         | Communications  | 2  | 2  |
| L-39ZO Albatross   | Armed Trainer   | 50 | 50 |
| MiG-17F            | Lead-in Trainer | 30 | 30 |
| L-29 Delfin        | Trainer         | 60 | 60 |
| L-39ZA Albatross   | Trainer         | 40 | 40 |
| MBB Flamingo       | Trainer         | 48 | 48 |
| MiG-15UTI          | Trainer         | 15 | 15 |
| MiG-21U/UM         | Trainer         | 20 | 20 |
| MiG-23UB           | Trainer         | 6  | 6  |
| MiG-25PU           | Trainer         | 2  | 2  |
| MiG-29UB           | Trainer         | 6  | 6  |
| Su-22U/UM-3        | Trainer         | 6  | 6  |
| PAC Mushshak       | Trainer         | 6  | 6  |
| Piper PA-31 Navajo | Survey          | 2  | 2  |

**Note:** During the 1980s and the 1990s Syria has been implementing a program to modernize its air force, within budget constraints. There was an unconfirmed report that Syria took delivery of 14 MiG-29SMT fighters at the end of 2000.

1. Reported order

<http://www4.janes.com>

### **Inventory: Rotary-Wing**

| <i>Type</i>     | <i>Role</i>        | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>In Service</i> |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| SA 342L Gazelle | Combat Helicopter  | 55              | 55                |
| Mi-24           | Combat Helicopter  | 36              | 36                |
| Mi-8/17         | Assault Helicopter | 100             | 100               |
| Mi-6            | Utility Helicopter | 10              | 10                |
| Mi-2            | Utility Helicopter | 20              | 20                |

**Note:** There is a helicopter naval element with the Syrian Arab Naval Air Arm, tasked

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with an anti-submarine warfare role.

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## **F. Navy**

### **NAVY SUMMARY**

|                                   |
|-----------------------------------|
| STRENGTH<br>4,000                 |
| SUBMARINE<br>1                    |
| FRIGATE<br>2                      |
| FAST ATTACK CRAFT - MISSILE<br>15 |

### Assessment

The navy has to a large extent been neglected by Syria while the land forces and air force have been built up. Although Syria has made an attempt to improve the capability of the navy in terms of submarine, surface and amphibious warfare capability, a significant part of the navy's equipment remains inadequate. Its submarine is obsolete and virtually non-operational, as are its two Petya class frigates. The Osa I and Osa II patrol boats lack advanced technology and their armament is quite old - 'Styx' missiles that are vulnerable to counter-measures.

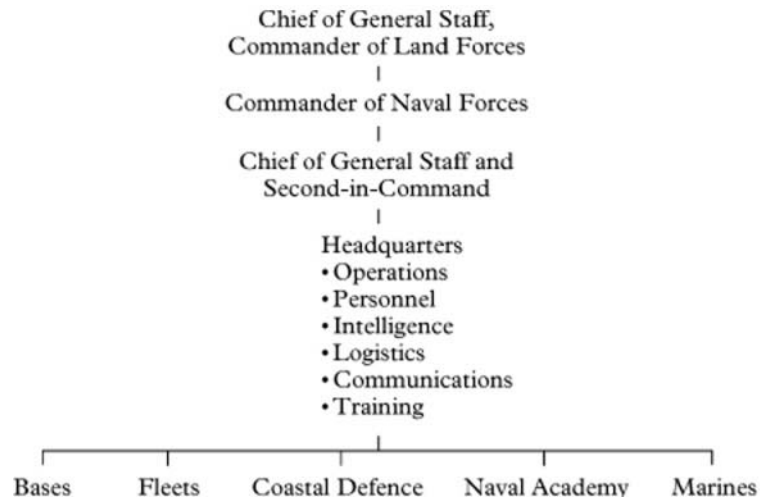
However, the navy has three quite modern Polnochny class medium landing ships and naval base facilities have been improved at Lattakia, Mina el Beida and Tartous. The last of these became a major facility for Soviet/Russian submarines. To bring about a major improvement in the combat capability of the navy Syria would have to invest major resources, which it does not appear to have available at present.

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### Chain of Command

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Commander-in-Chief           | Navy Vice Admiral Tayyara              |
| Chief of Staff               | Vice Admiral Kasssiem Mahummed Baydoun |
| Director of Naval Operations | Rear Admiral A Meidar                  |

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### Organization

The navy is quite a small force, which, in addition to an estimated 4,000 personnel, also has an estimated 2,500 reserves. Conscripts serve 18 months of national service.

The commander of naval forces comes under the command of the chief of general Staff, Commander of Land Forces. The navy has one 1,475-ton 'Romeo' class submarine, although it has not been to sea for three years. There are two 950-ton Petya III class frigates.

The navy also deploys 23 patrol and coastal craft. There are 12 210-ton missile fast-attack craft - two Osa I and 10 Osa II. They are armed with 'Styx' missiles. There are three 85-ton Komar class fast attack craft, also armed with 'Styx' missiles and there are eight 39-ton Zhuk class coastal patrol craft.

As regards amphibious forces, there are three 760-ton Polnochny B Landing Ship Medium (LSM) vessels. Each ship has a capacity for about 100 troops and five tanks. Mine warfare forces deploy one 804-ton Natya class vessel, as well as two 200-ton Vanya class minesweepers, one 500-ton T 43 minesweeper, one 400-ton Sonya class minesweeper and five 77-ton Yevgenya class inshore minesweepers.

Auxiliaries consist of one 400-ton Sekstan class vessel, one 70-ton Poluchat vessel, three survey launches and seven Rotork sea trucks. There is one 3,500-ton training ship, the *Al Assad*.

The navy includes a Marine Corps, comprising about 1,500 men, the role of which is to guard the navy's three main bases. They are organized in three detachments, one for each base.

Coastal defense has been under naval command since 1984. The command is made up of two infantry brigades, each of which is assigned to a coastal surveillance zone, and one observation battalion, the personnel of which are assigned to coastal observation posts. There are also two artillery battalions, each equipped with an estimated 18 M-46 130 mm

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guns and about six KS-19 100 mm anti-aircraft guns. A surface-to-surface missile brigade is made up of a dozen batteries, deploying SSC-1B 'Sepal' and SS-N-2 'Styx' coastal defence missiles.

<http://www4.janes.com>

### **Role and Deployment**

The essential roles of the navy are coastal defense and the maintenance of control over territorial waters. There is a particular emphasis on the defense of Syria's primary ports, Tartous and Lattakia, which are vital to the Syrian economy and which would also play a key role in resupply operations in the event of a major conflict with Israel. While seeking to improve its coastal defense capability, Syria has also been boosting the capability of the navy in terms of submarine, surface and amphibious warfare, although major inadequacies remain.

The following is a summary of the bases used by the Syrian Navy and the naval forces deployed in each base:

- Mina el Beida is a custom-built base used exclusively for naval purposes. Marine and frogman corps command posts are based here. There are also training centers for naval officers and specialist personnel.
- Lattakia is Syria's largest port and naval facilities there include a naval repair dockyard. Some of the fast attack craft (missile) are based at Lattakia.
- Tartous was not only an important base for the Syrian Navy, it also became the primary base for maintaining and replenishing Soviet/Russian submarines in the Mediterranean. Facilities include an 80,000-ton floating dock. Syria's submarine and two frigates are based there, as are the country's amphibious and mine warfare forces. Also based at Tartous are fast attack craft (missile) and coastal patrol craft.
- Some coastal patrol craft are based at Banias.

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### **Naval Weapons Systems**

SS-N-2A surface-to-surface missile

SS-N-2C surface-to-surface missile

SS-C-1B coastal defense missile

SS-C-3 coastal defense missile

36 × 130 mm guns, coastal defense

12 × 100 mm guns, coastal defense

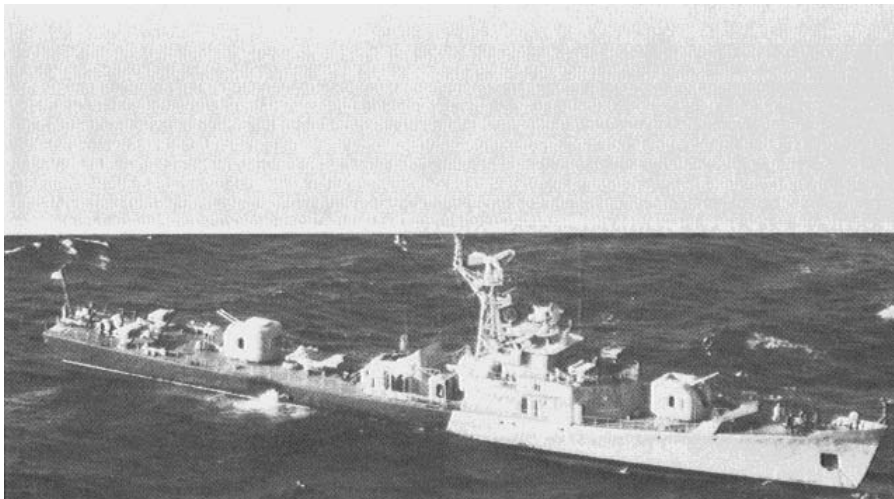
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**Inventory: Surface Fleet**



*Al Assad*



AL HIRASA

7/1975

| <i>Type</i>            | <i>Role</i>                         | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>Delivered</i> |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| Petya III              | Frigate                             | 2               | 1975             |
| Osa I                  | Fast Attack Craft - Missile         | 2               | 1972/3           |
| Osa II                 | Fast Attack Craft - Missile         | 10              | 1978/84          |
| Komar                  | Fast Attack Craft - Missile         | 3               | 1974             |
| Zhuk (Type 1400M)      | Coastal Patrol Craft                | 8               | 1980s            |
| Polnochny B (Type 771) | Landing Ship Medium                 | 3               | 1984/5           |
| Natya (Type 266M)      | Oceanographic Research/Mine-warfare | 1               | 1985             |
| Vanya                  | Minesweeper - Coastal               | 2               | 1973             |



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|                   |                       |   |         |
|-------------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
| T 43              | Minesweeper - Ocean   | 1 | 1959    |
| Sonya (Type 1265) | Minesweeper - Coastal | 1 | 1986    |
| Yevgenya          | Minesweeper - Inshore | 5 | 1978/86 |
| Sekstan           | Degaussing Craft      | 1 | n/a     |
| Poluchat          | Divers' Base Ship     | 1 | 1967    |
| Various           | Survey Launch         | 3 | 1986    |
| Rotork Sea Truck  | Light Logistic Craft  | 7 | 1980    |
| <i>Al Assad</i>   | Training Ship         | 1 | 1988    |

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### Inventory: Submarines

| <i>Type</i> | <i>Role</i>               | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>Delivered</i> |
|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| 'Romeo'     | Diesel Electric Submarine | 1               | 1986             |

<http://www4.janes.com>

### Inventory: Naval Aviation

| <i>Type</i> | <i>Role</i>    | <i>Quantity</i> | <i>In Service</i> |
|-------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| Mi-14PL     | ASW Helicopter | 20              | 20                |
| Ka-25BSh    | ASW Helicopter | 5               | 5                 |

Note: Pilots are air force personnel. All helicopters are shore-based.

<http://www4.janes.com>

## **15. Other Sources of Current Interest**

[http://www.meib.org/articles/0304\\_s1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0304_s1.htm)

[http://www.meib.org/articles/0304\\_s2.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0304_s2.htm)

[http://www.meib.org/articles/0211\\_s1.htm](http://www.meib.org/articles/0211_s1.htm)

<http://www.msnbc.com/news/904432.asp?0cl=c1>