

convoy near the al-Bishri mount killing at least 20 soldiers and destroying 4 vehicles.

SDF-linked Kurdish insurgents continued their attacks on Turkish forces in the region of Afrin. On April 19, Kurdish fighters targeted alleged Turkish positions near Maryamayn and Villat al-Qadi with anti-tank guided missiles. Pro-Kurdish sources claim that 6 Turkish soldiers were killed. However, the Turkish military released no statements regarding its casualties. Therefore, most likely the attacked positions belonged to Turkish-backed militants.

Syria's naval port of Tartus will be given for lease to Russia for 49 years, Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov told journalists on April 20 after meeting with Syria's President Bashar Assad. Moscow will use the port for economic and logistical purposes.

Russia already has a naval facility in Tartus, which was set up at the second largest port. This military facility is currently undergoing modernization.

These developments took place amid the growing economic cooperation between Russia's Republic of Crimea and Syria. According to official estimates, the cargo turnover between Crimea and Syria may reach 150,000t by the end of 2019. During the recent Yalta economic conference in Crimea, Syria and the local authorities reached even more agreements on the economic cooperation.

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