

Sudan Seeks Military Aid from Russia. President al-Bashir's Meeting with Putin in Sochi

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"We have been dreaming about this visit for a long time," said Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir as he [was being greeted](#) by Russian President Vladimir Putin on Nov.23 at the Black Sea resort of Sochi. "We are thankful to Russia for its position on the international arena, including Russia's position in the protection of Sudan," he added. This is the first time the Sudanese leader visited Russia – the country he pins great hopes on.

The agenda included economic and military cooperation. The Sudanese leader said he had discussed modernization of the Sudanese military with Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu before meeting President Putin.

"We agreed with the defense minister that Russia will offer assistance to that," he informed.

The sides agreed to increase the size of defense attaché staffs.

Omar al-Bashir asked the Russian president for "*protection from the aggressive acts of the United States.*" He expressed concern over the situation in the Red Sea, where he sees the US military presence as a problem, saying

"we would like to discuss the issue from the point of view of the use of bases in the Red Sea."

The Sudanese leader believes that the conflict in Syria is the result of US interference. The country would be lost if Russia did not lend a helping hand. The success in Syria boosts the Moscow's reputation and makes other developing countries seek its friendship and cooperation.

According to President al-Bashir, Sudan could serve as a gateway to Africa for Russia. Khartoum is looking forward to cooperation with Moscow in oil exploration, transport and agriculture. In 2015, Russian company Siberian for Mining found large gold deposits in Sudan with only explored reserves standing at 46,000 tons and signed the biggest investment deal in the country's history. Large gold deposits were discovered in two provinces – the Red Sea and the River Nile. The market value of the gold amounts to US \$298 billion.

Al-Bashir, who rose to power in 1989, is on the International Criminal Court's (ICC) wanted

list for allegedly committing crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide in Sudan's Darfur region. ICC prosecutors issued two warrants for al-Bashir's arrest, in 2009 and 2010. The Russian government recognizes al-Bashir as the legitimate president of the country. In 2016, Moscow [formally pulled out](#) from the ICC. The reason was the [failure](#) of the ICC "to... become a truly independent and respected body of international justice". According to Moscow, the judicial body is ineffective and one-sided. Some provisions of the Rome Statute contradict Russia's constitution, including the mandatory transfer of investigated persons to the ICC, the right to sue heads of state and government figures, and non-compliance with the principle that no one should be held accountable twice for the same crime ("ne bis in idem").

The Russia-Sudan summit is demonstration of Moscow's growing impact in Africa. Russia has more than 40 full-fledged diplomatic representations on the continent and has fixed special trade missions to help facilitate trade and investment in a number of African countries. Russia has a special relationship with South Africa. Both countries cooperate within the framework of BRICS. Egypt, a traditional US ally, has shifted sides and allied with Russia since President Sisi took power. Russia's relations with the countries of the continent are deepening. This is facilitated by negotiations at the highest level. Relations develop with leading regional associations, including the African Union.

The last couple of years have seen a rise in Russia-Africa trade, with aggregate turnover reaching \$14.5 billion in 2016, up by \$3.4 billion year-on-year. The bulk of it (\$10.1 billion) was done by four countries, including Egypt (\$4.16 billion), Algeria (\$3.98 billion), Morocco (\$ 1.29 billion) and South Africa (\$718 million).

28 out of 55 African nations boast growing trade with Russia, with Ethiopia, Cameroon, Angola, Sudan and Zimbabwe leading the trend. According to the Eurasian Economic Commission, Africa was the only region to have expanded its trade turnover with Russia in 2016 (unlike the EU, MERCOSUR, APEC, and others).

Nuclear power development options in Africa are now a hot topic, with relevant agreements already signed with Sudan, Zambia, Morocco, South Africa and other countries. Africa is a promising market for Russian grain and agricultural machinery, with the country's wheat exports heading to Morocco, South Africa, Libya, Kenya, Sudan, Nigeria and Egypt. Sudan, Congo and Senegal have recently indicated interest in pursuing joint oil and gas projects. Russian business holds a leading position in mineral exploration (bauxite, gold, and copper, and cobalt, and diamonds, and many more). Russian diamond-mining company ALROSA is active in South Africa, Sierra Leone, Namibia, and Angola (where it reportedly controls 60% of all extracted diamonds). An agreement with the African partners on economic and trade cooperation in order to avoid double taxation and protection of intellectual property is on the agenda.

Russia is a major supplier of arms to both North and sub-Saharan Africa. Russia continues to gain ground in North Africa, boosting its military exports to Algeria and Egypt while strengthening economic ties with Morocco and Tunisia. Russian arms are an increasingly popular alternative to US weaponry. Moscow's historically strong arms trade with African countries has been growing in recent years, despite tough competition. Russia ranks first in arms imports to sub-Saharan Africa accounting for 30% of all supplies. Missiles, artillery, small arms, and aircraft are key Russia's export items to Africa, with helicopters taking an increasingly important share.

There is something more to promote the Russia-Africa rapprochement. They have a common interest in the formation of a just and democratic world order, based on collective approach to the resolution of international problems and the superiority of international law. Both Russia and Africa, reject the unipolar model, the attempts of one country or a limited number of countries to impose their will on the rest of the world. Sudan is a good example of an African country getting closer to Russia in response to the pressure from the West. It seeks new partners to counter the diktat of the United States. Developing ties with Moscow offers such an opportunity.

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