

Russian Response to Illegal Missile Strikes on Syria

by staff report via claire - The Australian *Friday, Apr 7 2017, 5:06am*

international / prose / post

Aside from irrelevancies in the Murdoch press you would note that less than half the missiles launched by the US hit their target, compare to Russia's missile strikes during the early LEGAL intervention by Russia in Syria, almost 100% of launched missiles precisely hit their target.

For all the balderdash and hype of the western media (promoting war) the US has revealed to the WORLD its less than capable military in action -- A FREE GIFT TO RUSSIA AND CHINA, which States have far more advanced weaponry. It will be interesting to see how superior Russian offences/defences respond to the next feeble attempt by the backward USA to strong-arm the situation in the Middle East. I should also mention that Pentagon chiefs were well aware of their less than capable military technology.



Vladimir Putin

Report from *The Australian* follows:

Praise, condemnation for US Syria airstrikes

Donald Trump has launched 59 US Tomahawk cruise missiles against Syria's Shayrat airfield after a suspected chemical attack that killed at least 86 people, including children, caused international outrage.

Russia vows to help Syria defences

Russia is moving to support Syria's air defence system and has suspended all cooperation with the Pentagon, Russia's Defence Ministry spokesman Major-General Igor Konashenkov has announced.

Konashenkov said on Russian state television that only 23 of the 59 missiles fired by the US hit their

targets, rendering the air strike operation ineffective.

“According to the data recording equipment, only 23 missiles reached the Syrian air base. The place of the fall of the other missiles is unknown,” he said.

He said “the combat efficiency of the US strike was very low,” that it destroyed six MiG-23 fighter jets of the Syrian air force which were under repairs, but didn’t damage other Syrian warplanes at the base. Konashenkov said the base’s runway also had been left undamaged.

“We consider these steps taken by the United States to be a blatant violation of the 2015 Memorandum on preventing military incidents and ensuring security during operations in Syria’s air space. The Russian Defence Ministry is suspending cooperation with Pentagon aimed at the implementation of the memorandum.”

Mr Konashenkov said the Russians would now assist to reinforce the Syrian armed air defence system.

“To protect the most sensitive facilities of the Syrian infrastructure, a set of measures will be taken in the immediate future to reinforce and raise the effectiveness of the Syrian armed forces’ air defence system,” he said.

Russian President Vladimir Putin is to chair his Security Council to discuss US strikes on Syria, AP reports.

Kremlin confirms advance warning

The Kremlin has confirmed it received advance warning from the US about the air strike on the Syrian base, AP reports.

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov, speaking on a trip to Uzbekistan, strongly condemned the US strike, saying it violates international law.

Russian state TV has aired footage showing damage at the Syrian air base, including craters and pockmarks left by explosions and said that nine Syrian air force jets have been destroyed in the attack.

Fox News in the US is also showing video purportedly of damage to the Syrian base.

Completely far-fetched pretext: Lavrov

Russian foreign minister Sergey Lavrov said American provocations in Syria had caused “more harm” but he hoped it will not result in “irreversible effects” in the Russian-US relationship. He claimed the US air strikes mirrored 2003 when the US, UK and allies invaded Iraq without the consent of the UN Security Council.

Mr Lavrov said the United States failed to ascertain the facts before launching the air strikes, but instead looked at photos.

He accused rebel Syrian forces, including the humanitarian force White Helmets, of staging incidents to provoke the American response.

"This aggression is under a completely far-fetched pretext," Mr Lavrov said. "This is reminiscent of the situation in 2003, when the US and the UK, along with some of their allies, invaded Iraq without the consent of the UN Security Council and in violation of international law.

"Now they did not even bother to provide any facts referring only to photos. They indulged in speculations on children's photos, on evidence provided by various non-governmental organizations, including the so-called White Helmets, which staged various 'incidents' to provoke actions against the Syrian government."

Mr Lavrov added: "It is regrettable that all this causes more harm to the already damaged relations between Russia and the United States. It is to be hoped these provocations will not entail irreversible effects."

Tillerson to visit; Europe reacts

The diplomatic visit to Moscow by the US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson is likely to proceed as planned, senior Russian MP Leonid Slutsky told Rossya 24.

Meanwhile more world leaders are responding to news of the US air strike.

The leaders of France and Germany jointly blamed Syrian leader Bashar al-Assad for provoking the US action and called his actions "criminal".

French President Francois Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in a statement: "After the chemical weapons massacre of April 4th on Khan Sheikhun ...President Assad bears sole responsibility for this development."

Mr Hollande and Ms Merkel spoke by phone before issuing the joint response.

"The repeated use of chemical weapons and his crimes against the population demanded sanctioning," they said.

However French far-right presidential candidate Marine Le Pen said Donald Trump was trying to be the "world's policeman" with airstrikes on Syria and suggested that it could backfire by leading to rising Islamic extremism. .

Le Pen has expressed support for Assad in the past, and said on France-2 television on Friday that she was "surprised" by Trump's sudden move.

Le Pen appeared to be distancing herself from Trump. The two have similar views and Le Pen is hoping to ride a wave of protectionist, anti-immigrant sentiment to the presidency next month.

German Foreign Minister Sigmar Gabriel said the US action was "understandable", but demanded a political solution to the conflict.

"As understandable as the US military strike against the military infrastructure was after the failure of the UN Security Council, it is now crucial to launch a joint peace effort under the umbrella of the UN," he said.

NATO's chief was warned that the US was to launch missile strikes in Syria and is making no comment on the incident.

Jens Stoltenberg's office said that "we can confirm that NATO Secretary- General was informed by the US Secretary of Defense prior to the strikes." But it said: "we refer you to the US authorities regarding the strikes in Syria."

Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed support for the US attack.

Mr Abe said Japan understood and supported the American strategy, saying the strikes were "a means to prevent further deterioration of the situation" referring to the suspected chemical attack earlier in Syria this week.

Russia acts on Syria strike

Russia says it is suspending a deal with the US to prevent mid-air collisions over Syria in response to the American air strike on a Syrian air base. The Russian Foreign Ministry said in today's statement that Moscow is suspending a memorandum with the US to prevent incidents and ensure flight safety.

Under the memorandum, signed after Russia launched an air campaign in Syria in September 2015, Russia and the US had exchanged information about their flights to avoid incidents in the crowded skies over Syria.

Russia has several dozen warplanes and batteries of air-defence missiles at its base in Syria.

Act of 'blatant aggression': Syria military

The Syrian army says the US missile attack on one of its air bases killed six people and caused extensive damage, adding that it would respond by continuing its campaign to "crush terrorism" and restore peace and security to all of Syria.

A statement from the army command described the attack as an act of "blatant aggression", saying it had made the US "a partner" of Islamic State, the Nusra Front and other "terrorist organisations".

Limited and appropriate: Britain

British Defence Secretary Michael Fallon said the "limited and appropriate" US air strikes operation was a sole US operation and not part of the coalition that is fighting Daesh (Islamic State).

He said: "We haven't been asked to be involved in this, it's not part of the coalition, we are in a coalition to fight Daesh. The United States made clear it was a US operation but I emphasise we fully support it."

Mr Fallon said the mission was "limited and appropriate".

He added: "They have been determined to prevent future attacks like this, they have taken this action, limited and appropriate action on this airfield and that is action we fully support."

He said US officials had been in contact with their British counterparts "at all levels" before the strike and Prime Minister Theresa May was kept informed at all times.

Mr Fallon said the assessment of the chemical attack on Idlib earlier this week was that it was "highly likely" to be the work of the Assad regime. He said one of the reasons for the US missile

attack was to “deter the regime from using gas in this appalling way”.

Putin: a ‘trumped-up pretext’

Russian President Vladimir Putin has accused the US of using a “trumped-up pretext” to launch a missile attack in violation of international law and warned it would damage Russian relations with the United States.

This comes as Britain backed the missile strikes as an appropriate response to the regime leader Bashar Al-Assad’s barbaric chemical attack.

“The UK government fully supports the US action, which we believe was an appropriate response to the barbaric chemical weapons attack launched by the Syrian regime, and is intended to deter further attacks,” a Downing Street spokesperson said.

Russian presidential spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporter in Moscow: “President Putin considers the US strikes against Syria an aggression against a sovereign country violating the norms of international law, and under a trumped-up pretext at that”.

He said Washington’s total disregard for the use of chemical weapons by terrorists exacerbates the situation “significantly”.

He added: “Putin also sees the strikes on Syria by the US as an attempt to divert the attention of the international community from numerous civilian casualties in Iraq.”

The US launch of 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles at the Shayrat airfield near Homs was a direct response to the use of chemical weapons, believed to be Sarin gas near Idlib earlier this week which killed more than 70 people.

Before the strikes began the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan branded Bashar al-Assad a murderer and said: “How will you be able to recover from the curse from this?”

Russia: a violation of international law

The Kremlin says US strike on Syria is “aggression against sovereign state in violation of international law” and that the act inflicts “considerable damage” to US-Russia ties.

“This step by Washington inflicts considerable damage to US-Russia relations, which are already in a lamentable state,” Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said.

Iran condemns US attack

Iran has condemned the US missile strike on Syria, saying the “unilateral action is dangerous, destructive and violates the principles of international law.” That’s according to Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi. He made the comments in a report carried Friday by the semi-official ISNA news agency. Iran is one of the biggest supporters of embattled Syrian President Bashar Assad. Its hard-line paramilitary Revolutionary Guard is deeply involved in the war. America’s Sunni Arab allies in the Gulf view Syria as a proxy conflict between it and Shiite power Iran.

At least four killed at airbase

The US tomahawk airstrike on Syria's Shayrat airfield has killed at least four soldiers and virtually destroyed its facilities, a monitoring group says.

"An air commodore was among the four soldiers killed," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"The airbase was almost completely destroyed -- the runway, the fuel tanks and the air defences were all blown to pieces," the Britain-based monitoring group said.

"There were Sukhoi-22, Sukhoi-24 and MiG-23" fighter aircraft on the ground, Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP.

The officers' quarters at Shayrat, the government's second most important airbase, were also damaged, he added.

Only Latakia airbase in the heartland of President Bashar al-Assad's regime on the Mediterranean coast, where his ally Russia also maintains extensive facilities, is more extensive.

Obama 'should have moved sooner'

Referring to the US missile strike on Syria, Labor MP Michael Danby told The Australian that sometimes "failure to act has worse consequences than acting" and argued Barack Obama should have moved sooner to prevent Assad from using chemical weapons.

Mr Danby praised the move by Mr Trump, saying he was "right" to proceed with the missile strike, and took a swipe at ABC host Tony Jones for his comments on the ABC's Q&A program earlier this week.

"Tony Jones typically asked the wrong Question on Monday night's Q&A. He suggested that anyone who wanted action to prevent Assad gassing more of his own countryman wanted a ground army to invade Syria."

"This argument is bullshit," Mr Dany said. "Destroying Assad's poison gas factories is what President Obama promised and should have done."

"If Obama had done that after the previous use of Sarin in Damascus in 2014, the Syrians would not have access to poison gas; the Syrians' air-force would never have flown again and Assad the Butcher would have been driven from office."

Mr Danby said that, in the interim, a further 250,000 civilians had been killed

"I bow to no-one in my aesthetic and political distaste for Donald Trump, but something can be right even if Donald Trump says and does something right."

What is next?

The reality with Donald Trump is that we do not know what is next: could he launch a cruise missile attack against North Korea writes

If so, how would China react?

And is this attack a one-off - Tomahawks across the bows - or the beginning of a sustained escalation of US presence in the Middle East?

Russia to release statement shortly

Russia's Foreign Ministry says it is preparing a statement regarding the air strikes

Shortly before the missiles were launched, the head of information policy commission in the upper house of Russian parliament, Alexei Pushkov, said on Twitter said that if Mr Trump launched a military action in Syria it would put him in "the same league with Bush and Obama."

Russian deputy envoy to the UN, Vladimir Safronkov, said Russia had warned the US to "think about what military actions have led to in Iraq, Libya and other countries," according to the Interfax news agency.

'World crying out for settlement'

Here's a wrap of Mr Turnbull's press conference, in which he declared the Australian government "strongly supports the swift and just response of the United States" to the use of chemical weapons by the Assad regime in Syria.

The Prime Minister said Australia was advised about the strike "shortly prior to the attack" and had discussed the US response with the Chief of the Defence Force, Mark Binskin, as well as members of the national security committee of cabinet.

Mr Turnbull said the use of chemical weapons in Syria had led to the deaths of more than 70 people in "horrific circumstances" and that it was time for the nations of the world to come together and "bring this war to an end."

Today the United States has responded, launching 59 cruise missiles from two naval destroyers against the al-Shayrat military airfield south-west of Homs from which the chemical attack was conducted," Mr Turnbull said. "This was a calibrated, proportionate and targeted response. It sends a strong message to the Assad regime."

He clarified the strike was not designed to overthrow the Assad regime, but had instead demonstrated the "full force" of the United States. Mr Turnbull argued the attack sent a powerful signal that the "world would not tolerate the use of these chemical weapons" which he branded "illegal," "abhorrent" and a "war-crime."

"These crimes against humanity, shocking and horrific -- even in the context of the Syrian conflict zone -- cannot be committed with impunity," he said. "The perpetrators must be held to account."

Mr Turnbull confirmed that Australia was not involved in the strike to take out the airfield, but said "all of the players, including Russia" had a role to play in bringing the conflict in Syria to an end.

"The world is crying out for a settlement in Syria and this is a time now when the United States have shown that they will not tolerate these crimes, when the United States has shown its full force in response to this shocking chemical attack."

Mr Turnbull said it was time for the "great powers engaged in the Syrian conflict" to bring the war to a close and said there was a "solemn obligation on Russia to play its part" in achieving that

objective.

Israeli PM praises strikes

Meanwhile Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu has welcomed the attack, saying he “fully supports” President Trump’s decision.

Mr Netanyahu said: “In both word and action” Mr Trump “sent a strong and clear message” that “the use and spread of chemical weapons will not be tolerated.”

Israel’s Channel 2 TV said Israel along with other allies was notified about the U.S. strike.

‘Unite to bring war to end’

The PM asserts that neither the US nor Australia was at war with Syria. But he says the chemical attack raises serious questions about Bashar Assad’s leadership.

“The United States have made it clear that they are not seeking to overthrow the Assad regime,” he said.

However, Mr Turnbull said the events of the past few days raised “very real questions” about the role of Assad in any political solution or settlement in Syria.

He said the US had not asked for extra military support from Australia. Asked about Russia’s role, the prime minister said it had a “real responsibility” to ensure the Assad regime complied with international law. “The fact is there is a solemn obligation on Russia, too, to play its part in bringing this conflict to an end.”

The PM reiterates that the strike was intended as a “humanitarian intervention” against a chemical attack that was shocking even by the standards of “this brutal war.”

He says all sides of the conflict, including Russia, should unite to bring the conflict to an end.

The whole world is crying out for a settlement in Syria.

“The US has shown its full force in response to this shocking chemical attack, surely now is the time for the nations of the world .. to come together to bring this war to an end.”

Syria slams ‘enemy America’

The cruise missiles struck aircraft, a runway, fuel pumps and other infrastructure at Shayrat, military officials said.

Syrian state-run media said the attack by “enemy America” led to losses. A second report on the pro-regime Al Masdar News said the attack caused significant damage to the Shayrat air base and multiple casualties.

Syria: Policy won't change’

The governor of Syria’s Homs province has attacked the US missile strikes, saying they serve the goals of “armed terrorist groups” and Islamic State. “Syrian leadership and Syrian policy will not

change,” Homs Governor Talal Barazi said in a phone interview with state television on Friday. “This targeting was not the first and I don’t believe it will be the last,” he added.

UN Resolution cancelled

Meanwhile, Russia’s deputy UN ambassador said the US decision to cancel a vote on a UN resolution that would condemn the reported chemical weapons attack on a Syrian town “opens a window of opportunity” to find a compromise.

Vladimir Safronkov told reporters after closed Security Council consultations that a resolution “should not, cannot and will not pre-judge the outcome from (an) investigation.”

Russia strongly objected to provisions in the original draft circulated by Britain, France and the United States which it said blamed President Bashar Assad’s forces for the attack before an investigation.

Safronkov said he can’t understand why the council rejected Russia’s proposal for sending a team to conduct an “impartial, objective, honest investigation.”

Russia warned via hotline

More on how Russia was warned ahead of the strike: the Pentagon has said Moscow was warned via a special military hotline.

“Russian forces were notified in advance of the strike using the established deconfliction line,” Navy Captain Jeff Davis said. “US military planners took precautions to minimize risk to Russian or Syrian personnel located at the airfield.”

Was Russia given heads up?

Former Australian ambassador to Syria Bob Bowker has said the US strike on a Syrian airbase would not escalate the conflict if Russia was informed beforehand.

“Provided they’d alerted the Russians beforehand, which I think they probably did, and there was no unexpected collateral damage to Russian service people and so on, I don’t think we’ll see any real escalation,” Mr Bowker told 3AW radio.

He said it appeared to be was clearly targeted.

“I think it was intended to send a message to the Syrians that they’d crossed the line, as Trump had foreshadowed,” Mr Bowker said.

There has been no response as yet from Moscow but earlier, Russia’s Ambassador Vladimir Safronkov warned the US there could be “negative consequences” if Washington took military action in Syria.

“All responsibility if military action occurs will be on the shoulders of those who initiated such a doubtful tragic enterprise,” Mr Safronkov said.

“We have to think about the negative consequences.”

"Look at Iraq, look at Libya," he said referring to Western interventions in those countries that unleashed years of chaos.

The above covers the most important aspects of the story though there's much more but irrelevant to international audience -- if you wish to read it follow link below and pay Murdoch for the 'privilege.'

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