

Russian military threatens action against the US in Syria

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- It said Gerasimov said Russia had "reliable information" about militants preparing to falsify a government chemical attack against civilians.
- Gerasimov said Russia would respond to a U.S. strike on Syria if the lives of Russian servicemen were threatened, targeting any missiles and launchers involved.

The Russian military has threatened action against the U.S. if it strikes Syria's capital city of Damascus, according to multiple news reports.

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Mikhail Metzel | TASS | Getty Images

Russia's First Deputy Defence Minister, Chief of the General Staff of the

Russian Armed Forces, General Valery Gerasimov.

He continued by saying the U.S. would then use this attack to accuse Syrian government troops of using chemical weapons. He added that the U.S. would then plan to launch a missile strike on government districts in Damascus.

“In several districts of Eastern Ghouta, a crowd was assembled with women, children and old people, brought from other regions, who were to represent the victims of the chemical incident, ” Gerasimov said, according to RIA.

Gerasimov said Russia would respond to a U.S. strike on Syria if the lives of Russian servicemen were threatened, targeting any missiles and launchers involved.

“In case there is a threat to the lives of our military, the Russian Armed Force will take retaliatory measures both over the missiles and carriers that will use them,” he said.

The U.S. Department of Defense urged Russia to “stop creating distractions” and “enabling the Assad regime’s brutality” in a statement sent to CNBC responding to the allegations.

Drafting a new ceasefire

The comments come as Syrian President Bashar Al Assad’s regime, which is supported by Russia, continues to carry out airstrikes over the rebel-held enclave of Eastern Ghouta just outside Damascus.

The United Nations Security Council had demanded a ceasefire in Syria two weeks ago to allow nearly 1,000 sick and wounded civilians to leave so they can seek urgent medical treatment. On Monday, the U.S. threatened to “act if we must” if the UN ceasefire resolution continues to be ignored.

U.S. Ambassador to the UN, Nikki Hailey, said Monday that the U.S. was drafting a new ceasefire resolution with “no room for evasion” and warned the country was prepared to act.

“It is not the path we prefer, but it is a path we have demonstrated we will take, and we are prepared to take again,” Haley told the UN Security Council on Monday.

“When the international community consistently fails to act, there are times when states are compelled to take their own action,” she added.

Syria has experienced a civil war for the past seven years. The conflict started following a popular uprising against Assad and his regime. Unlike other countries in the Middle East affected by the “Arab spring,” Assad’s regime did not fall so easily, and what’s more, Russia offered Assad’s regime its support against a variety of rebel groups. To complicate matters further, these rebel groups have also been fighting the so-called Islamic State which is occupying parts of Syria.

The U.S. and other allies have supported “moderate” rebel groups against ISIS, but the war is also seen as a battle for influence between Russia and the West in the Middle East. As ISIS’ influence has waned and rebel-held locations reclaimed, Assad has regained the upper hand in Syria.

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Tuesday that establishing more deescalation zones in Syria was not a priority for now, Reuters reported.

He told reporters that it was important to prevent violation of ceasefire agreements in eastern Ghouta, a situation which he planned to discuss with Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu who is on a visit to Moscow.

Source: <https://www.cnn.com/2018/03/13/russia-military-threatens-action-against-the-us-in-syria.html>

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