

Statement from Pentagon Spokesman on U.S. Strike in Syria

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Two US Navy destroyers, USS Porter and USS Ross, fired 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles against a Syrian air force base at Shayrat from the Eastern Mediterranean early on April 7, 2017. (US Navy photo)

WASHINGTON - At the direction of the president, U.S. forces conducted a cruise missile strike against a Syrian Air Force airfield today at about 8:40 p.m. EDT (4:40 a.m., April 7, in Syria).

The strike targeted Shayrat Airfield in Homs governorate, and were in response to the Syrian government's chemical weapons attack April 4 in Khan Sheikhoun, which killed and injured hundreds of innocent Syrian people, including women and children.

The strike was conducted using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles (TLAMs) launched from the destroyers USS Porter and USS Ross in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea. A total of 59 TLAMs targeted aircraft, hardened aircraft shelters, petroleum and logistical storage, ammunition supply bunkers, air defense systems, and radars. As always, the U.S. took extraordinary measures to avoid civilian casualties and to comply with the Law of Armed Conflict. Every precaution was taken to execute this strike with minimal risk to personnel at the airfield.

The strike was a proportional response to Assad's heinous act. Shayrat Airfield was used to store chemical weapons and Syrian air forces. The U.S. intelligence community assesses that aircraft from Shayrat conducted the chemical weapons attack on April 4. The strike was intended to deter the regime from using chemical weapons again.

Russian forces were notified in advance of the strike using the established deconfliction line. U.S. military planners took precautions to minimize risk to Russian or Syrian personnel located at the airfield.

We are assessing the results of the strike. Initial indications are that this strike has severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment at Shayrat Airfield, reducing the Syrian Government's ability to deliver chemical weapons.

The use of chemical weapons against innocent people will not be tolerated.

Trump Orders Missile Attack in Retaliation for Syrian Chemical Strikes

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WASHINGTON - The United States fired Tomahawk missiles into Syria today in retaliation for the regime of Bashar Assad using nerve agents to attack his own people.

President Donald J. Trump ordered the attack on Al-Shayrat Air Base, the base from which the chemical attack on Syria's Idlib province was launched. The missiles were launched from U.S. Navy ships in the Eastern Mediterranean Sea.

The attack is in retaliation for the Syrian dictator for using banned chemical agents in the April 4 attack.

"Bashar al-Assad launched a horrible chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians," Trump said in a statement to the nation. "Using a deadly nerve agent, Assad choked out the lives of helpless men, women and children. It was a slow and brutal death for so many. Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this very barbaric attack. No child of God should ever suffer such horror."

Vital National Security Interest

Trump ordered the targeted military strike on the airfield that launched the attack. "It is in the vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons," the president said.

No one disputes that Syria used banned chemical weapons of the people of Idlib, he said, adding that this is a violation of the Chemical Weapons Convention. Syria also ignored United Nations Security Council resolutions.

"Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behavior have all failed and failed very dramatically," Trump said. "As a result, the refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilize, threatening the United States and its allies." Trump called on all civilized nations to join the United States in seeking an end to the slaughter in Syria, and to end the threat terrorism poses in the blighted nation.

Details of Strike

Shortly after the president's address, Pentagon spokesman Navy Capt. Jeff Davis issued a statement providing details of the strike. It took place at about 8:40 p.m. EDT -- 4:40 a.m. April 7 in Syria, he said.

The strike was conducted using Tomahawk Land Attack Missiles, or TLAMs, launched from the destroyers USS Porter and USS Ross in the eastern Mediterranean Sea, Davis said in his statement. A total of 59 TLAMs targeted aircraft, hardened aircraft shelters, petroleum and logistical storage, ammunition supply bunkers, air defense systems, and radars.

"As always," Davis said, "the U.S. took extraordinary measures to avoid civilian casualties and to comply with the Law of Armed Conflict. Every precaution was taken to execute this strike with minimal risk to personnel at the airfield."

The strike was "a proportional response to Assad's heinous act," the Pentagon spokesman said, noting that Shayrat Airfield was used to store chemical weapons and Syrian air forces. The U.S. intelligence community assesses that aircraft from Shayrat conducted the April 4 chemical weapons attack, he added, and the strike was intended to deter the regime from using chemical weapons again.

Russian forces were notified in advance of the strike using the established deconfliction line, Davis said, and U.S. military planners took precautions to minimize risk to Russian or Syrian personnel at the airfield.

"We are assessing the results of the strike," Davis said. "Initial indications are that this strike has severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment at Shayrat Airfield, reducing the Syrian government's ability to deliver chemical weapons. The use of chemical weapons against innocent people will not be tolerated."