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U.S. Drops Bombs On Syria; Strike Said To Be Limited

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Three days after stating that U.S. bombs on Syria would be coming "fast and smart" in retaliation for the use of chemical weapons that Western powers say was carried out by the Syrian government of Bashar al-Assad, the United States, with support of its European allies France and Great Britain, launched targeted strikes on Syria, lighting up the night sky with weapons of war that ricocheted in the wee hours of Saturday morning in the war-worn country.

The operation was a limited effort to strike three targets, according to President Donald Trump, although he said it would be sustained to punish the Assad regime.

"The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children, thrashing in pain and gasping for air," said Mr. Trump in his address to the country on the strike. "These are not the action of a man, they are crimes of a monster instead."

But Defense Secretary Jim Mattis, who had urged the president to use caution and restraint in the American response, said the administration had no more strikes planned.

"We confined it to the chemical weapons-type targets," Mr. Mattis said. "We were not out to expand this; we were very precise and proportionate, but at the same time, it was a heavy strike."

The strike on Syria was the Western powers' warning to the Assad government that they would not tolerate the continued use of chemicals weapons. A similar strike on the country was carried out [one year ago](#) by the U.S.

Aside from having the potential of pulling America deeper into a potentially protracted and complicated Middle Eastern war that the Trump administration has tried hard to steer clear of, the attacks also showed that Mr. Trump was not afraid to enrage Russia -- and certainly not Iran -- as has been the belief of many in the U.S., based on Mr. Trump's slow response to past aggression from Vladimir Putin, the Russian president.

During his address to the nation, Mr. Trump had biting words for both Mr. Putin and Iran.

"To Iran and to Russia I ask: What kind of a nation wants to be associated with the mass murder of innocent men, women and children?" the president said. "The nations of the world can be judged by the friends they keep. No nation can succeed in the long run by promoting rogue states, brutal tyrants and murderous dictators."

Russian responded with stern words of its own: "We warned that such actions will not be left without consequences," Anatoly Antonov, the ambassador to the United States, said in a statement. "All responsibility for them rests with Washington, London and Paris."

Mr. Antonov added, "Insulting the president of Russia is unacceptable and inadmissible."

On twitter, Mr. Assad [said](#), "Honorable souls cannot be humiliated."

While France and Britain aligned with the U.S. for the strikes, a notable European player, Germany, although condemning the use of chemical weapons as "unacceptable," stood on the sidelines.

Britain Prime Minister Theresa May said the Syrian action demanded retaliation. "This persistent pattern of behavior must be stopped — not just to protect innocent people in Syria from the horrific deaths and casualties caused by chemical weapons, but also because we cannot allow the erosion of the international norm that prevents the use of these weapons," she said.

Even so, the prime minister -- echoing the motives of the U.S. -- emphasized that the strikes were limited, another sign that neither the U.S. nor its allies favor widening the conflict.

“This is not about intervening in a civil war,” she said. “It is not about regime change. It is about a limited and targeted strike that does not further escalate tensions in the region and that does everything possible to prevent civilian casualties.”

Tomahawk cruise missiles were launched from at least three American warships, according to the Department of Defense. It said B-1 bombers dropped long-range missiles on targets. French and British warplanes also fired long-range missiles, while a British submarine launched cruise missiles.

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