

Donald Trump tells Russia missiles fired at Syria ‘will be coming’

US President Donald Trump threatened to fire missiles at Syria following threats from Moscow to counter any attack. Earlier Russian officials said they would shoot down any US missiles.



US President Donald Trump threatened conflict with nuclear-armed Russia on Wednesday, as Washington and Moscow engaged in military brinkmanship over a suspected chemical weapons attack outside Damascus.

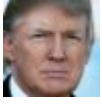
“Russia vows to shoot down any and all missiles fired at Syria. Get ready Russia, because they will be coming, nice and new and “smart!” You shouldn’t be partners with a Gas Killing Animal who kills his people and enjoys it!,” Trump tweeted.



Donald J. Trump ✓ @realDonaldTrump

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Our relationship with Russia is worse now than it has ever been, and that includes the Cold War. There is no reason for this. Russia needs us to help with their economy, something that would be very easy to do, and we need all nations to work together. Stop the arms race?

The United States, Britain and France have threatened to take military action against Syria over its alleged use of chemical weapons in Douma, the last rebel enclave in eastern Ghouta outside Damascus. A US-led attack on Syria could inadvertently hit Russian or Iranian troops stationed throughout the country.

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Russia threatens retaliation

Earlier Wednesday, Russia’s ambassador to Lebanon warned that any attack on Syria would be met with a military response.

“If there is a strike by the Americans then ... the missiles will be downed and even the sources from which the missiles were fired,” said Alexander Zasytkin, adding that the two sides should avoid such a situation and negotiate.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said in response to Trump’s threats that the US should target “terrorists, rather than the legitimate government” in Syria.

“Smart rockets should be aimed at terrorists, rather than the legitimate government, which has for several years been fighting international terrorism on its territory,” she said in a Facebook post.

Russia has multiple military assets in Syria, including its S-400 anti-missile system.

In a sign of what response may come, Syrian air defenses shot down five of eight

suspected Israeli missiles fired at a military base on Monday. The suspected Israeli attack was unrelated to Douma.

Read more: 'America will not engage in a huge military entanglement'

Syria lambasts 'reckless' US threat

The Syrian government condemned Trump's statement and reiterated its accusation that the US sponsors terrorism.

"We are not surprised by this reckless escalation from a regime like the one in the United States, which has and continues to sponsor terrorism in Syria," said the Syrian Foreign Ministry.

Washington's threats, it added, "show [it] lacks not only principles and values but also wisdom and logic and that in itself endangers international peace and security."

The ministry also said the US's accusation against the Syrian government for being responsible for Saturday's chemical weapons attack was "a flimsy and unsubstantiated excuse to target Syria."

WHO says Douma victims' 'symptoms consistent' with chemicals

Russia has urged the United States to show restraint and said there was no evidence the regime of Syrian President Bashar Assad used a banned chemical agent in Douma.

Moscow and Damascus have blamed rebels in Douma of staging an attack to draw an international response. Controlled by the Army of Islam, Douma is the last rebel-held enclave in eastern Ghouta after the regime backed by Russia and Iran have retaken more than 90 percent of the Damascus suburb since launching an offensive on February 20.

After the weekend attack, Army of Islam fighters and their families agreed to leave Douma to a Turkish-controlled zone in the north of the country.

An estimated 500 people show signs of exposure to toxic chemicals after attack in Douma outside the Syrian capital over the weekend, the World Health Organization said Wednesday.

“In particular, there were signs of severe irritation of mucous membranes, respiratory failure and disruption to central nervous systems of those exposed,” WHO said in a statement, citing reports from its medical sources. “More than 70 people sheltering in basements have reportedly died, with 43 of those deaths related to symptoms consistent with exposure to highly toxic chemicals.”

Analysts say the attack in Douma appears to bear the signs of a chlorine attack.

Assad has been blamed for previous chemical attacks, including by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) for a sarin-like attack last April on the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun in northwestern Syria.

The attack in Khan Sheikhoun prompted the United States to launch cruise missile strikes against an airbase from where the sarin attack was suspected to have been launched from.

Stalled at UN

On the diplomatic front, the US and Russia on Tuesday blocked each other’s UN Security Council resolutions calling for investigations into the alleged chemical weapons attack.

The OPCW plans to send a team to Douma to determine if a chemical weapon was used.

However, the chemical weapons watchdog does not have authority to assign blame and a full investigation can take months.

Source: <http://www.dw.com/en/donald-trump-tells-russia-missiles-fired-at-syria-will-be-coming/a-43340472>

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