

Live US strikes on Syria: Donald Trump's missile attack 'kills four children' as Russia condemns 'aggression'

 [telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/07/donald-trump-launches-us-air-strikes-against-assad-regime-syria/](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/04/07/donald-trump-launches-us-air-strikes-against-assad-regime-syria/)

Harriet Alexander , New York Danny Boyle Barney Henderson

4/7/2017

British ambassador to UN speaking now

Matthew Rycroft, Britain's ambassador to the UN, says it is a shame that Bolivia's ambassador spent more time attacking the US than condemning Assad.

Matthew Rycroft, British ambassador to the UN

The United Kingdom supports the air strikes because war crimes have consequences.

The US strike was a proportional response.

It was a strong effort to save lives, and ensure such attacks never happen again.

UN Security Council meeting begins

Expect fireworks (see 15:33).

The ambassador to Bolivia is currently holding up a photo of Colin Powell at the UN, recalling how the invasion of Iraq unfolded following mistaken beliefs about chemical weapons.

He is saying:

"I believe it is vital to remember what history teaches us.

"The United States affirmed that it had all the information."

4:14PM

"America is back"

Mitch McConnell, the Senate majority leader, has just given his response.

Mitch McConnell

He said:

This strike was well planned, and well executed.

I think it also reassures our allies that America is back, and can play a role.

It also sends a message to Iran and North Korea.

3:33PM

Fighting talk from Nikki Haley

The US ambassador to the UN, Nikki Haley, has just issued a strong statement about the Security Council meeting today.

Nikki Haley, speaking at the United Nations

Bolivia wanted it to be held in private; she insists that anyone who wants to defend Assad must do so publicly.

She said:

"This morning, Bolivia requested an emergency UN Security Council meeting to discuss the events in Syria. It asked for the discussion to be held in closed session.

"The United States, as president of the Council this month, decided the session would be held in the open.

"Any country that chooses to defend the atrocities of the Syrian regime will have to do so in full public view, for all the world to hear."

3:14PM

What to expect from the US?

There are several meetings in the US today which should tell us more.

In about half an hour, **Donald Trump** is due to speak - he's currently in the Florida resort of Mar-a-Lago, hosting China's president, Xi Jinping.

At 11:30am in New York, 4:30pm GMT, the **UN Security Council** will hold a session on Syria.

And then this afternoon, around 1pm, **Senators** will be briefed by General Joseph Dunford, chairman of the joint chiefs of staff. (Congress has already left for its Easter break; the Senate leaves this evening).

2:27PM

European Parliament president bans Syrian official from conference

Antonio Tajani, the European Parliament president, has banned a top Syrian official from a conference on the conflict after the suspected chemical attack on a rebel-held town earlier this week.

Tajani sent a message to leftwing MEP Javier Couso warning that Syrian Deputy Foreign Minister Ayman Soussan would not be allowed to attend the conference planned by the politician on Monday, according to a copy of the document seen by AFP.

European Parliament President Antonio Tajani Credit: SEBASTIEN BOZON/AFP

"Please be advised that, following the recent use of chemical weapons and the subsequent developments, I have decided not to authorise this event on parliamentary premises," Tajani said, according to the message.

"I have taken this decision as politically it is clearly inopportune to hold this conference," he said.

"For security reasons, I have also decided not to authorise Mr Ayman Soussan access to the European Parliament," he added.

2:19PM

Marco Rubio: Syria strikes will have impact on Kim Jong-un's thinking

Marco Rubio, a former rival of Mr Trump's for the presidency, has followed John McCain in praising the strikes.

He said it has changed Assad's "calculations" and also would have an impact on Kim Jong-un's thinking.

He said: "That's the calculation Assad makes – if I do this, I might get some bad headlines, but it's OK.

"If you're Kim Jong-un and you're sitting there in North Korea you're wondering what am I dealing with here – and I think you're a little more worried than you were 24 hours ago."

Asked if he would support deeper US military engagement in Syria, he said:

"That may be quite possible, but it needs to further an aim. We need to empower non-jihadi groups. Al-Nusra, Isis, a lot of them are foreigners. We have to have a Sunni alternative to Assad's rule.

"If it's in furtherance of a policy I do agree with it. If it's just a tactic, then no."

2:12PM

Pictured: The air base hangar targeted by US missiles

Footage showed on official Syrian television shows the burned and damaged hangar attacked by US Tomahawk missiles at the Shayrat air base.

The missiles destroyed six warplanes and is said to have killed six Syrian servicemen - as well as a reported nine civilians.

Syrian hangar damaged in US missile strike Credit: Syria US/AP

1:57PM

John McCain quotes Churchill as he says air strikes are 'beginning, not end'

John McCain, the elder statesman of Republican politics, has appeared on American breakfast television to discuss the Syria strikes.

He began by quoting Churchill, saying that this was the beginning, not the end. Mr McCain said:

"We have a Middle East in chaos. There is the challenge of Assad. And the challenge of Isis.

"But the signal sent last night was a very, very important one."

Mr McCain said that the action taken overnight sent an important signal to the world - and would encourage American allies.

"A lot of Arab countries are willing to be partners with us, as long as they can rely on us.

| *"This is thousand year old rivalry between Persians and Arabs, and just another manifestation of it."*

And he said that it was encouraging because it showed Donald Trump was willing to listen to his advisers, who Mr McCain praised:

| *"This is a team the president has assembled. I've never seen better people. The question was: would the president listen to his team? And obviously he did."*

| *"That's what most encouraging to me. He respects Mattis, he respects McMaster, he respects Kelly."*

1:47PM

Turkey calls for immediate ousting of Assad

Turkey has called for Assad's immediate ousting, voicing support for the US missile strikes and saying the creation of safe zones to protect civilians was now more important than ever.

"It is necessary to oust this regime as soon as possible from the leadership of Syria," Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu told reporters, in a hardening of Turkey's tone.

"If he doesn't want to go, if there is no transition government, and if he continues committing humanitarian crimes, the necessary steps to oust him should be taken."

President Tayyip Erdogan's spokesman Ibrahim Kalin said the US action marked "an important step to ensure that chemical and conventional attacks against the civilian population do not go unpunished" and said a no-fly zone should be enforced.

1:35PM

Nigel Farage turns on Donald Trump after Syria strikes

Former Ukip leader Nigel Farage is among the right wing populists who have turned on the President, reports **Helena Horton**.

Mr Farage said: "I am very surprised by this. I think a lot of Trump voters will be waking up this morning and scratching their heads and saying 'where will it all end?'"

"As a firm Trump supporter, I say, yes, the pictures were horrible, but I'm surprised. Whatever Assad's sins, he is secular."

He said Britain should not get involved in any further strikes, commenting: "Previous interventions in the Middle East have made things worse rather than better."

[Click here](#) to read more.

1:32PM

Why did the US strike al-Shayrat air base?

The strike on al-Shayrat air base near the western Syrian city of Homs was both a symbolic and a tactical one, reports **Josie Ensor**, The Telegraph's Middle East Correspondent.

The airfield is not just a valuable military target, it is also the one from which the Syrian government launched its chemical attack on Tuesday. Donald Trump had intended [the raid as a direct retaliation](#).

Shayrat is one of the largest and most active Syrian Air Force bases, which has served as the nerve centre of its missions against rebels in Homs, as well as Palmyra, where government forces have been battling Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (Isil). [Click here](#) to read more.

1:30PM

Expert: Syria strikes are 'largely symbolic'

Dr Leslie Vinjamuri, a leading expert on the ongoing civil war in Syria, has told The Telegraph that Donald Trump's missile strikes against the country are unlikely to lead to any real change in the US's military strategy.



Watch | Syria strikes are 'largely symbolic,' says Middle East expert

01:00

12:50PM

Video: Drone footage shows US air strikes, Russian military claims



Watch | Russian drone footage claims to show the US airstrikes

France and Germany: Assad bears sole responsibility for this development

French President François Hollande and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have issued a joint statement on the US strikes:

"Following the massacre with chemical weapons on April 4 in northwestern Syria, a Syrian regime military base was destroyed by a US airstrike last night.

"President Assad bears the sole responsibility for this development. His repeated use of chemical weapons and his attacks against own population deserve sanctions, as France and Germany requested following the massacre in Ghouta in the summer of 2013.

"France and Germany will work alongside the UN to continue its efforts to hold Assad accountable for his villainous acts."

12:31PM

Assad condemns strike as 'reckless, irresponsible'

Syrian President Bashar Assad's office has denounced the US strike, describing it as "reckless, irresponsible behaviour".

A statement called the attack a "rash" action, saying Washington was "naively dragged in by a false propaganda campaign".

12:16PM

Analysis: US missile strike will not 'significantly diminish' Assad's ability

Reed Foster, military capabilities analyst at Jane's, said the attack would "not significantly diminish" Assad's ability to launch other chemical weapon attacks, reports Defence Correspondent **Ben Farmer**.

He said: "The varied airborne delivery mechanisms traditionally within Syrian forces' inventories means that attacking this one base will not take out their total capabilities."

Mr Trump's decision to use ship-launched cruise missiles had avoided the risk to US manned jets from Syria's formidable air defences, he said.

But targeting radar and air defence sites at Shayrat suggested an attempt to soften up the base's defences, "potentially paving the way for further strikes if deemed necessary".

12:12PM

Russian missile frigate pictured heading to Syria

The cruise-missile carrying frigate Admiral Grigorevich was seen passing south through the Bosphorus on Friday morning, reports **Roland Oliphant**.

The frigate, which carries Russia's state-of-the-art Kalibr cruise missiles, came home from the Mediterranean just nine days ago.

It was refitting at the port of Novorossiisk and conducting joint exercises with the Turkish navy before heading south again.

It is not immediately clear if the redeployment is in a response the US strikes against Syria. Sources told Russia's TASS news agency that the ship is headed to Russia's Syrian naval facility at Tartus.

11:23AM

Jeremy Corbyn condemns US missile attack

Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn has condemned the US missile attack, saying it "risks escalating the war in Syria still further".

Mr Corbyn warned that US President Donald Trump's decision to take military action could further intensify a conflict that has already left hundreds of thousands of people dead.

The notoriously anti-war Mr Corbyn went on to press the Government to "urge restraint on the Trump administration" and push for peace negotiations. Here is his full statement:

11:10AM

Four children among nine civilians killed - claims

The Syrian state news agency says that the US attack killed nine civilians, including four children, in areas near the base struck by missiles overnight.

Russian officials have said that four servicemen - none of them Russian - have been killed by the strikes and two are missing, meaning the death toll currently stands at an estimated 15 people.

11:06AM

Latest claims from Russia over US strikes

After the Kremlin warned that the US strikes on Syria are an act of "aggression" that is "in violation of international law", here are the latest claims reaching us from the Russian Defence Ministry:

- Only 23 US rockets hit their target - it is not clear where the 36 others landed
- Missiles destroyed six planes in repair hangers
- US strikes had 'extremely low' military effectiveness
- Militants started an offensive on Syrian army positions immediately after the strikes
- US strikes are 'crude violation' of joint agreement on Syrian air safety
- Plans in hand to strengthen Syrian military air defences
- Kremlin will keep technical military channels of communication open with US, but will not exchange information
- Strikes carried out 'in interests of Islamic State and other terrorist groups'
- President Putin to hold security council meeting to discuss US assault on air base

10:53AM

Labour MP says US action was 'proportionate'... still no word from Corbyn

While Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, a pacifist, is yet to make a statement on the US strikes, one of his MPs who chairs the party's backbench defence committee has said the action "should have Labour's full support". John Woodcock said:

"The US action overnight was proportionate and should have Labour's full support.

"Chemical weapons were outlawed after their horrific impact in the First World War and failure to respond to the chilling gas attack in Idlib province this week would have emboldened regimes to use them more often, including potentially against British troops.

"It is disappointing that the UK government sat on its hands until the US acted. 24 hours ago, Theresa May was insisting no one was contemplating a military response.

"But now, the UK should use this moment to take the lead in pushing for wider humanitarian protection which could enable desperately needed aid to get through to starving Syrian civilians."

Asked on Thursday if he would support military intervention in Syria under any circumstances, Mr Corbyn said: "I want us to bring about peace in Syria.

"I think that's best brought about by looking at the sources of support for the various protagonists in the war, the role that's played by neighbouring states, by Russia and others, but basically, get around the table in Geneva."

10:50AM

Hilary Benn hopes 'Syria will now think twice before deciding to gas its own people again'

Hilary Benn, the former shadow foreign secretary said he hoped "Syria will now think twice before deciding to gas its own people again".

In December 2015, the Labour MP for Leeds Central was clapped and cheered by fellow politicians after his

"historic" speech backing UK military intervention in Syria - putting him at odds with pacifist Jeremy Corbyn.



Watch | Hilary Benn's powerful speech on Syria in full

14:34

On Friday morning, Benn tweeted:

10:44AM

Paul Nuttall: Missile attack is 'rash, trigger-happy, nonsensical'

Paul Nuttall, the UKIP leader has condemned the missile attack on Syria as "rash, trigger-happy, nonsensical and will achieve nothing". He said:

"The whole world rightly condemns the use of chemical weapons in Syria, but the US attack on the Assad regime does nothing to lower tensions, nor will it hasten peace in that country.

"Too often rash responses to horrific situations are about the conscience of the attacker, rather than a clear-headed response to an awful situation.

"There are currently no good options in Syria. Assad or Isis is not a choice anyone would wish to make. But firing off missiles in an enraged response shows weakness not strength in the face of horror. I hoped for better from this administration."

10:38AM

Donald Tusk: EU will work with US to end brutality in Syria

Donald Tusk, the President of the European Council who met Theresa May in Downing Street yesterday, has said the European Union will "work the the US to end brutality in Syria":

10:28AM

Pictures: 'Remnants of cruise missile' and inside the air base

Photos have emerged on Twitter apparently showing remnants of one of the cruise missiles that struck the Syrian air base. Images also reportedly show that one of the two runways is intact.

10:11AM

Video reportedly shows damage to Syrian air base

10:10AM

Tillerson: No change in US policy on Syria

Despite the military strikes overnight, US Secretary of State Rex Tillerson has issued a statement suggesting that it is not an indication it will lead to deep US involvement in the civil war. He said:

"This clearly indicates the President is willing to take decisive action when called for and I think in this particular case the use of prohibited chemical weapons which violates a number of international norms and violates existing agreement called for this type of a response, which is a kinetic military response.

"I would not in any way attempt to extrapolate that to a change in our policy or our posture relative to our military activities in Syria today. There has been no change in that status."

10:04AM

Labour's Tom Watson: US strikes 'appear to be direct and proportionate response'

Tom Watson, Labour's deputy leader, has put more pressure on Jeremy Corbyn by backing US strikes against the Syrian regime.

Mr Watson said the strikes ordered by US President Donald Trump "appear to be a direct and proportionate response" to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons.

He told the [Birmingham Mail](#): "Indiscriminate chemical weapons attacks on civilians can never be tolerated and must have consequences."

Mr Corbyn is yet to respond to the US strikes, which have been supported by both the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats.

Mr Watson said: "These US strikes appear to be a direct and proportionate response to a clear violation of international law by the Syrian regime.

"It's clear from the nerve gas attack in Khan Sheikhoun earlier this week that President Assad had retained a chemical weapons capability, contrary to what was agreed in 2013.

"It's vital that the United States is now clear about its intentions and that the whole international community works

towards a political settlement in Syria."

9:54AM

Death toll from US missile strikes rise to seven - five servicemen and two civilians

A Syrian official has said that at least seven people were killed in the missile strikes, which wounded nine others. Nine planes are also reported to have been destroyed.

Talal al-Barrazi, the governor of Homs province, said five servicemen and two civilians from a nearby village were killed, Russia's state owned RIA Novosti reported.

Russia's foreign minister said Russian no servicemen have been hurt in the strikes.

U.S Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Porter in the Mediterranean Sea overnight Credit: REUTERS

9:33AM

Video purports to show damage to Syrian air base

This unverified footage appears to show damage to the Shayrat air base.

Russian TV reported that nine planes were destroyed in the US strikes. State television showed images of the bombed Syrian air base, showing craters and rubble.

9:23AM

High-profile Trump supporters turn against President on Twitter

Some of Donald Trump's most high-profile supporters on social media turned against the President for ordering the missile strikes after he had campaigned against intervening in foreign conflicts.

Paul Joseph Watson, the UK-based editor of far-right conspiracy website Infowars, tweeted: "I'm officially OFF the Trump train"

Right-wing blogger Mike Cernovich wrote on Twitter:

Conservative author Ann Coulter tweeted: "Those who wanted us meddling in the Middle East voted for other candidates. She added:

Ms Coulter was referring to Mr Trump's remarks that his attitude towards Syria and Assad had "changed very much" after learning that children had been victims of the chemical attack.

9:12AM

Video: A recent history of US-Russia relations

As the Kremlin condemns Donald Trump's strike against the Assad regime in Syria, we look back at the rocky relationship between the two world powers.



Watch | A recent history of US-Russia relations

02:05

[9:10AM](#)

Lib Dem leader Tim Farron: We cannot stand by, we must act

Liberal Democrat leader Tim Farron [backed the US action](#) and said the UK should be prepared to become involved militarily as well.

He said: "The British Government, rather than just putting out a bland statement welcoming this, should now follow it up and call an emergency meeting of the Nato alliance to see what else can be done, be that more surgical strikes or no fly zones.

"Evil happens when good people do nothing. We cannot sit by while a dictator gasses his own people. We cannot stand by, we must act."

USS Ross fires a tomahawk land attack missile Credit: ROBERT S. PRICE/AFP/Getty

[9:08AM](#)

Ex-UK Syria ambassador: President Assad is 'not mad'

Peter Ford, the former UK Syria ambassador told the BBC's Radio 4 Today programme that the "rush to war" must be stopped as he claimed President Assad is "not mad" and had no reason to use chemical weapons against his own people.

Mr Ford also claimed that a "more plausible" explanation for the chemical attack is that a jihadi weapons dump was hit by strikes - a similar line to the one touted by Russia.

[9:06AM](#)

Russia suspends air safety deal with US designed to avoid clashes over Syrian airspace

Russia has suspended its air safety agreement with America over Syria in response US missile strikes on a military air base, saying the action had caused “considerable” damage to Moscow-Washington relations, reports Middle East Correspondent **Josie Ensor** in Beirut.

The deal is designed to avoid clashes in the crowded airspace above Syria. Read more [here](#).

Moscow has called an emergency meeting of the United Nations Security Council to discuss the strikes.

The Russian Foreign Ministry said it is "obvious" that the US strikes were prepared before the chemical attack earlier in the week as it called the air strikes "thoughtless".

8:50AM

Video: The images that prompted Trump to launch air strikes

At least 72 people, including 20 children, were killed by a suspected mixture of chlorine and a nerve agent in an attack in the largely opposition-held Idlib province on Tuesday. As these images - which some readers might find disturbing - show, many of the victims were children.



Watch | The human cost of Assad's war on the Syrian people

02:33

8:45AM

More from Fallon: I hope Russia will learn from what happened last night

Michael Fallon has said he hopes Russia "[will learn](#)" from America's attack on Syria last night and halt President Assad's war against his own people by exerting its political influence, reports Political Correspondent **Kate McCann**.

The unmistakably strong message to President Putin will be seen as the UK stepping up efforts to broker a solution in the war-torn country after the Defence Secretary admitted that without the backing of Parliament the UK would not join in military action.

He told Radio 4's Today programme that the British Government had "close discussion" with the Americans ahead of the strike including being involved in the discussions about how to proceed which began a few days ago.



Watch | Michael Fallon: US gave UK advance notice of Syria strike

00:33

Sir Michael, who said he fully supports the attack, said he was given advance notice of the strike last night, but added that the UK was not asked to get involved.

He said: "There is a coalition in which we are involved in ... this was to be a United States operation." The Defence Secretary denied that the strike was a "declaration of war", but said: "The Americans have made it very clear the attack last night was limited, narrowly focused and did everything possible to avoid civilian casualties."

He added that Mr Trump's decision shows that he will act in the same way again if faced with a similar chemical attack carried out by the Syrian Government.

Sir Michael added:

"This is the first gas attack President Trump has been faced with and he has decided to take action in this way ... that is the message we take from last night.

"The American administration has made it clear now that that is not acceptable and that has to be deterred.

"It is Russia that has the influence over the regime and could bring this slaughter to a stop. I hope Russia will learn from what happened last night and use its influence over Assad."

8:32AM

'If action is not taken, innocent civilians are going to die at the hands of this appalling gas'

Speaking to ITV's Good Morning Britain, Sir Michael Fallon expanded on his comments:

"We fully support this strike - it was limited, it was appropriate, and it was designed to target the aircraft and the equipment that the US believe were used in the chemical attack; and to deter President Assad from carrying out future chemical attacks."

"President Assad and the Syrian regime have continued to flout international law. We've caught them using chemical weapons and gases elsewhere, and this latest incident in which nearly 100 people seem to have been killed is yet another example of, if action is not taken, innocent civilians are going to die at the hands of this appalling gas."

"Something had to be done about it and we fully support the American action."

8:29AM

Fallon confirms UK was not asked to get involved with US operation

Speaking on Radio 4, Sir Michael Fallon has confirmed the UK was not asked to get involved with the US operation.

He refused to answer the "hypothetical" question on whether or not Britain would join air strikes if the US had asked for help, but said: "We fully support what the Americans have done... it was wholly appropriate."

Sir Michael added: "We are helping to redouble our efforts to get parties in Syria to agree a settlement in which Assad doesn't play a part."

8:14AM

Air strikes kill six and lead to 'big material losses'

The Syrian Army says the air strikes killed six people and led to "big material losses", as it said the United States has committed a "blatant aggression against one of our air bases".

8:12AM

Sir Michael Fallon reveals US counterpart rang him about plan for air strikes

Sir Michael Fallon, the Defence Secretary, has disclosed that the British Government knew in advance about the US plan for air strikes. He said:

- US Defence Secretary James Mattis called him on Thursday evening about the plan for strikes on the Syrian airfield
- "We have had close contact at all levels with the US Government" over the Syrian air strikes
- The British Government has not been asked to be involved in the strikes
- The Government does not see the strike in Syria as the "start of a different military campaign"
- The UK "does not see a long-term future for Assad in Syria"

7:56AM

Five killed and seven wounded in air strikes

The Governor of Homs, the city in western Syria, confirmed that five people were killed and seven wounded in the US attack.

7:38AM

Why destroying the Shayrat air base is no minor strike

Destroying Shayrat air base is no minor strike, reports The Telegraph's Middle East Correspondent **Josie Ensor**.

It is one of the largest and most active Syrian Air Force bases, with a number of assets.

It is the base from which air craft departed to carry out Tuesday's chemical attack. It is the closet to its battles with rebels in Homs and Isil in Palmyra.

Russia had been building up the base and had once had several warplanes stationed there. They were not there at the time of the strikes, however.

Lebanese TV station Al Maydeen reports that the Syrian Air Force managed to move all its airplanes at Shayrat to a secure base before the US attack.

Mr Trump's strikes are just a slap on the wrist at this stage however, rather than any real attempt to ground the Syrian Air Force.

7:18AM

Kremlin: Strikes are 'violation of international law'

The Kremlin has warned the US strikes on Syria are "aggression against a sovereign state in violation of international law" as it warned they will do "significant damage" to Russian ties with the US.

President Vladimir Putin's spokesman, Dmitry Peskov, said Mr Putin believed the US had carried out the strikes under a "far-fetched pretext".

He said America had ignored previous incidents involving the use of chemical weapons by Syrian rebels, and that the Syrian government had destroyed such stockpiles under international control.

6:37AM

Russian MP: US air strikes on Syria are political double standards

Air strikes by the United States on a Syrian air base show Washington is guilty of political double standards, the RIA news agency cited Yury Shvitkin, deputy head of the Russian lower house of parliament's defence committee, as saying.

He said the United States was using the Islamic State militant group as a tool for its own geopolitical interests.

6:36AM

Australia 'strongly supports the swift and just response of the United States'

Malcolm Turnbull, Australia's prime minister, said that the "Australian government strongly supports the swift and just response of the United States."

He told reporters in Sydney on Friday: "This was a calibrated, proportionate and targeted response. It sends a strong message to the Assad regime, and ... has been struck at the very airfield from which the chemical attack was delivered."

Here is a [full round-up of how the world reacted to the US air strikes](#).

6:23AM

Iran condemns US strikes

Iran "strongly condemns" the US air strikes on its ally, Syria, according to Tehran's state news agency.

6:18AM

Britain: US air strikes 'appropriate response'

The British Government has said today that the US missile strike on a Syrian air base is an "appropriate response".

A No 10 spokeswoman said: "Overnight, the US has taken military action against the Syrian regime, targeting the airfield in Shayrut which was used to launch the chemical weapons attack earlier this week.

"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."

6:16AM

Saudi Arabia says it fully supports US military strikes in Syria

Saudi Arabia has said it "fully supports" U.S. strikes on military targets in Syria, saying it was a "courageous decision" by Mr Trump in response to the use of chemical weapons against civilians, Reuters reports.

"A responsible source at the foreign ministry expressed the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia's full support for the American military operations on military targets in Syria, which came as a response to the Syrian regime's use of chemical weapons against innocent civilians...", a statement carried by state news agency SPA said.

The statement praised what it described as "the courageous decision" by Trump and said it holds the government of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad responsible for the military strikes.

6:13AM

At least four soldiers including an officer reported killed

At least four soldiers including an officer were killed in the US air strikes, the Syrian Observatory has stated.

The group reported that the air base was "almost completely destroyed".

The guided-missile destroyer USS Porter (DDG 78) conducts strike operations while in the Mediterranean Sea, April 7, 2017

6:06AM

Russia: cooperation with US military could end

A senior Russian politician has stated that military cooperation with the US could end as a result of this morning's air strikes.

Konstantin Kosachev, chairman of the international affairs committee in the upper house of the Russian parliament, said the strikes were intended to "stamp an earlier verdict about (Syrian President Bashar) al-Assad's responsibility for a chemical attack in Idlib with gunpowder," the Interfax news agency reported.

5:55AM

How the US Tomahawk strike in Syria unfolded

Nick Allen reports:

Preparing the ground for the strike

The airstrikes happened less than an hour after Mr Trump finished dinner with the Chinese president Xi Jinping at Mar-a-Lago, his private club in Florida.

Beforehand the Pentagon gave a heads up to the Russian military using a "deconfliction" channel which had previously been established to avoid the two nation's forces in the area taking out each other.

It was a priority for the US to avoid hitting any Russian military personnel or planes, which would risk an escalation.

However, the deconfliction move may have led to Russia alerting Syria, and the scrambling of jets from Shayrat.

Donald Trump with Xi Jinping at Mar-a-Lago Credit: AP

Picking the target

Shayrat had been identified by US intelligence as the launching point for the jets that dropped sarin gas on civilians in Idlib.

According to Lieutenant Colonel Rick Francona, former US military attache to Syria, who has been to the base, it was "bare bones" and home to two air squadrons.

There are two runways, hardened shelters for the planes, and an administrative area. Only a few small towns are nearby meaning the prospect of civilian casualties was low.

Each missile was programmed with a specific target and that included the control tower, the hard top hangars, fuel stations for the planes, ammunition dumps, air defence systems, and radar installations.

Satellite image of Shayrat airfield Credit: DigitalGlobe

Before 2013 the base was used to store chemical weapons but nothing was targeted that could have contained them now.

It was believed there may have been sarin gas stored in one warehouse but that was avoided.

There were no Russian planes at the airfield.

USS Ross fires a missile Credit: AFP

The strike

Missiles began hitting Shayrat at 3.45am local time, which was part of an effort to avoid casualties by striking in the middle of the night.

The 59 Tomahawk cruise missiles guided by satellite and they continued landing for between three and four minutes.

A Syrian military official said there had been "losses".

Pentagon spokesman Captain Jeff Davis said: "Initial indications are that this strike has severely damaged or destroyed Syrian aircraft and support infrastructure and equipment, reducing the Syrian government's ability to deliver chemical weapons."

Video released by the Pentagon showed the missiles being launched from two US Navy destroyers, the USS Ross and USS Porter, in the eastern Mediterranean.

The video itself, endlessly replayed on a loop on US cable television, was intended to send a clear signal about the might of the US military.

[Read the full article.](#)

5:37AM

Russia: air strikes could undermine fight against terrorism in Syria

The head of the Russian upper house of parliament defence committee has said this morning's air strikes could undermine efforts to fight against terrorism in Syria, state media in Moscow reported.

Viktor Ozerov said: "This (the attack) could be viewed as an act of aggression of the U.S. against a U.N. nation."

He said he would call for an immediate meeting of the UN Security Council.

It was the first official statement from Russia about the US air strikes.

5:34AM

Syrian National Coalition welcomes US intervention

The Syrian National Coalition opposition group welcomed the US strikes that hit a Syrian army airbase and said it hoped they continue to stop Syrian government air strikes and "use of internationally banned weapons", an SNC media official has told Reuters.

5:32AM

Homs governor: Shayrat air base was being used in fight against Islamic State

Homs Governor Talal Barazi has said the targeted air base had been providing air support for army operations against Islamic State east of Palmyra.

"I believe - God willing - that the human casualties are not big, but there is material damage. We hope there are not many victims and martyrs," he told Reuters by telephone.

Speaking at dawn, he said rescue and fire-fighting operations had been going on for two hours at the base.

He said the attack was a form of "support for the armed terrorist groups, and it is an attempt to weaken the capabilities of the Syrian Arab Army to combat terrorism".

Speaking to Syrian state TV, Barazi said: "The Syrian leadership and Syrian policy will not change.

"This targeting was not the first and I don't believe it will be the last," he added. In separate comments to al-Mayadeen, a Lebanese TV station, he said: "The war against terrorism will continue."

5:25AM

Mike Pence remained at the White House to monitor air strikes

Mike Pence did not travel with the president and all his key national security advisers to Florida for the Xi Jinping meeting as may have been expected.

It is now known that the vice president was monitoring the military strikes from the Situation Room at the White House.

5:14AM

Syrian opposition rebel commander welcomes 'turning point'

A Syrian opposition rebel commander whose district was among those hit by chemical weapons says he hopes the US attack on a government air base would be a "turning point" in the six-year war, AP reports.

Major Jamil al-Saleh, who heads a U.S.-backed rebel group in central Hama, said the U.S. attack targeted the air base from where this week's gruesome chemical weapons attack against civilians was launched.

Al-Saleh, who leads the Alezzah Army that operates in Hama province, said the continuation of U.S. strikes against government military facilities would protect the Syrian people.

5:11AM

Image released by US defence department showing impact of Tuesday's chemical weapons attack

A combination image released by the U.S. Department of Defense which they say shows the impact crater associated with April 4, 2017 Chemical Weapons Allegation

5:03AM

US defence official calls strike on Syria a 'one-off'

The US cruise missile strike against Syria was a "one-off," meaning that it was expected to be a single strike with no current plans for escalation, a US defense official has told Reuters.

The official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said he believed that the strike did not signal a major shift in Mr Trump's focus on domestic affairs.

U.S. Navy guided-missile destroyer USS Ross, from which the missiles were launched Credit: Reuters

5:00AM

'I am going to name my son Donald, if I have one'

Qusai Zakaria, is a Syrian activist who survived the chemical weapons attack in Moadamiya in 2013. **Ruth Sherlock** was speaking with him when he found out that Donald Trump had launched the missile strike against the military base.

"Oh my dear god. Oh my God. Thank you so much!" he said, over and over. "I am going to name my son Donald, if I have one. This man is a hero. He has balls."

"This is will give people hope. It's all about hope. This is a game changer; it's a new era that shows that America will actually do something. It shows there are real red lines in Syria."

"Like Donald Trump says; 'This is huge'."

Mr Zakaria said he believed that the chemical attack in Idlib had been part of a new effort to take back this area, one of the last remaining rebel bastions in Syria.

He said the regime had been trying to "spread terror" with the weapon, and so cause opponents to flee the country.

He said in the days leading up to the attack, the regime had dropped some chlorine gas bombs in the area. "They were testing the waters," he said.

"These were small attacks but they wanted to see how the Trump administration reacted," he said.

When Rex Tillerson, the secretary of state, said last week that the Syrian people should be left to decide whether to keep Assad, Mr Zakaria said, the regime took that to mean that the US didn't care.

"A few days later they translated this belief into action on the ground with chemical weapons. It's a weapon of terror and sent an obvious message inside and outside of Syria that the regime is still here. That it feels it can do anything."

If Mr Trump had not launched this attack, Mr Zakaria said, they were going to "turn Idlib into a slaughter house".

4:57AM

Tillerson: No change in US policy on Syria

The secretary of state has issued a statement suggesting that this morning's military strike on a Syrian regime air base is not an indication the US will lead to deep US involvement in the civil war:

This clearly indicates the president is willing to take decisive action when called for and I think in this particular case the use of prohibited chemical weapons which violates a number of international norms and violates existing agreement called for this type of a response, which is a kinetic military response. I would not in any way attempt to extrapolate that to a change in our policy or our posture relative to our military activities in Syria today. There has been no change in that status.

4:50AM

Paul Ryan: This action was appropriate and just

4:33AM

'This was a predictable action by the new president'

Alex Ward from the Atlantic Council followed the Trump transition team, and now focuses on Donald Trump's foreign policy. He tells **Ruth Sherlock** that this was a predictable action by the new president.

"Donald Trump has a coherent world view but no coherent foreign policy," he said.

"When it comes to this his world view, it is 'America always needs to look tough'. Mr Ward said this was an opportunity to act in accordance with that view.

He said the fact that Mr Trump didn't demonstrate his usual "bravado" in his first response to the chemical attack, indicated that he was intending to do something significant.

He said that that this was unlikely to be part of any wider strategy over how to manage the conflict in Syria.

4:23AM

Benjamin Netanyahu gives 6am statement in support of Trump military action

4:05AM

John Allen: 'This will not cause Russia backlash'

Retired General John Allen, the US envoy to the anti-Isil coalition under Barack Obama, has told **Ruth Sherlock** that the missile attack is intended to punish but not defeat Assad - and that this will not damage America's relationship with Russia.

Gen Allen said that this is a relatively small target. "The damage to Assad is psychological more than physical," he said.

"It will be stunning to Assad" that America has acted in this way, and "he will now have to think carefully every time" time he wants to launch attacks on his civilian population, Gen Allen said.

Gen Allen said this would not prompt a backlash from Russia and Iran, who are supporting the Syrian regime. "Who will come up for air and say they are angry with the US for punishing the Syrians for killing civilians in the most horrible way a human can die?"

He said that if anything this show of force would help to US regain power on the world stage. "We have this old saying that sometimes it's not a bad thing to just play the crazy American," Gen Allen said.

"Not only does America have great power, but it typically demonstrates great restraint. But every now and then using that power gets everybody's attention. With this, Trump put the Assad regime on notice, and sent warning to the Putin, Jinping and Kim Jong-un regimes too."

4:01AM

Markets roiled after US launches airstrikes

Safe-haven bonds and the yen jumped in Asia on Friday, while stocks fell after the United States launched cruise missiles against an air base in Syria, raising the risk of confrontation with Syrian backers Russia and Iran.

The U.S. dollar dropped three-quarters of a yen in currency markets, while sovereign bonds, gold and oil prices rallied hard.

MSCI's broadest index of Asia-Pacific shares outside Japan shed 0.7 percent in short order, and S&P 500 futures lost 0.5 percent in an unusually sharp move for Asian hours. Japan's Nikkei was stripped of its early gains to slip 0.1 percent.

3:57AM

Images of the Tomahawk missiles being launched

3:54AM

Gen John Allen: Trump wanted to re-establish the 'red line' that Assad crossed

Ruth Sherlock has spoken with retired General John Allen, who was Barack Obama's envoy to the global coalition to counter the Islamic State group and a four-star Marine Corps general. Here is his take:

"One of the things James Mattis [secretary of defence] used to say to us is that great powers don't get angry. With this Trump wanted to send a couple of messages."

First, Gen Allen said, Mr Trump wanted to "attempt to re-establish the red line" that Assad had crossed during Mr Obama's presidency. "Obama failed to enforce that red line and that emboldened the Assad regime to feel they could act with impunity."

He said that Mr Trump wants to "re-establish the fire break".

Secondly, Gen Allen said, the president used this to send a "very clear message" to Kim Jong-un, the leader of North Korea.

Mr Trump is in Mar-a-Lago, his Florida resort this evening, meeting with Xi Jinping, the Chinese president. Chief on the agenda was how to deal with the threat from North Korea's growing nuclear programme.

"There could not be a better confluence of opportunity for Trump to depict himself as a decisive leader who willing to use military action," Gen Allen said.

3:46AM

Homs governor says U.S. strikes on Syria serve 'goals of terrorism'

US missile strikes on Syrian military positions serve the goals of "armed terrorist groups" and Islamic State, the governor of Syria's Homs province has said, Reuters reports.

"Syrian leadership and Syrian policy will not change," Homs governor Talal Barazi said in a phone interview with state television. "This targeting was not the first and I don't believe it will be the last," he added.

3:44AM

'The strike was a proportional response to Assad's heinous act'

Statement from Pentagon Spokesman Captain Jeff Davis:

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.

3:32AM

McMaster: Trump was given three options for how to retaliate

H. R. McMaster, the US National Security Adviser, said the president was given three options for how to retaliate to Tuesday's chemical weapons attack.

Mr Trump told his advisers to focus on two of them, he said, without giving details. The president made the decision to launch the air strikes earlier on Thursday.

"Obviously, the regime will retain a capacity to commit mass murder with chemical weapons beyond this airfield," he said.

3:26AM

Tillerson: Russia either complicit or incompetent in its ability to carry out the (2013) agreement on Syria's chemical weapons

The US secretary of state has stated that Russia failed to carry out the 2013 agreement to secure Syrian chemical weapons.

He said that "clearly Russia has failed in its responsibility to uphold an agreement.. to get rid of Syria's chemical weapons".

He said that "Moscow was either complicit or incompetent in its ability to carry out the (2013) agreement".

3:23AM

Syrian state TV reports lives were lost in the US air strike

Syrian state TV says the US missile attack on a Syrian air base "leads to losses".

3:19AM

US informed Russia before the strike

US officials informed Russian forces beforehand that the air strike was going to happen on Shayrat base, the Pentagon has stated.

US jets did not strike areas of the base where Russian forces were believed to be present, officials stated.

There were Russians at the base, but Americans had several conversations with Russians during the day.

3:17AM

President 'needs congressional approval for military action'

3:11AM

Trump's full statement

Flanked by Steve Bannon and his daughter Ivanka Trump, the president said:

On Tuesday, Syrian dictator Bashar al-Assad launched a horrible chemical weapons attack on innocent civilians using a deadly nerve agent.

Assad choked out the lives of innocent men, women and children. It was a slow and brutal death for so many. Even beautiful babies were cruelly murdered in this barbaric attack. No child of god should ever suffer such horror.

Tonight I ordered a targeted military strike on the airfield in Syria from where the chemical attack was launched.

It's in this vital national security interest of the United States to prevent and deter the spread and use of deadly chemical weapons.

There can be no dispute that Syria used banned chemical weapons, violated its obligations under the chemical weapons convention, and ignored the urging of the UN security council. Years of previous attempts at changing Assad's behaviour have all failed.

As a result the refugee crisis continues to deepen and the region continues to destabilise, threatening the United States and its allies.

Tonight I call on all civilised nations to join us in seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria, and also to end terrorism of all kinds and all types.

We ask for god's wisdom as we face the challenge of our very troubled world.

We pray for the lives of the wounded and for the souls of those who have passed.

And we hope that as long as America stands for justice that peace and harmony will in the end prevail.

Goodnight and god bless America and the entire world.

3:03AM

Marco Rubio: President Trump has made it clear to Assad and those who empower him that the days of committing war crimes with impunity are over

I salute the bravery and skill of the men and women of our Armed Forces who conducted this mission. Tonight's strike against the Assad regime's Shayrat Air Base will hopefully diminish his capacity to commit atrocities against innocent civilians. By acting decisively against the very facility from which Assad launched his murderous chemical weapons attack, President Trump has made it clear to Assad and those who empower him that the days of committing war crimes with impunity are over. What must follow is a real and comprehensive strategy to ensure that Assad is no longer a threat to his people and to U.S. security, and that Russia no longer has free reign to support his regime.

2:53AM

Syrian state TV slams American 'aggression'

Syrian state TV reports: "American aggression targets Syrian military targets with a number of missiles."

2:49AM

Trump: air strikes in the 'vital national security interest' of US

President Donald Trump has said the strike on Syria was in the "vital national security interest" of the United States

Trump calls on "civilised nations" to join the US in "seeking to end the slaughter and bloodshed in Syria".

He said there can be no dispute that the Assad regime used chemical weapons, referring to Mr Assad as the Syrian dictator.

He said years of attempting to change Assad's behaviour had failed.

2:44AM

Trump's first use of military force

His administration is less than three months old, but Mr Trump has already ordered military intervention in the

Middle East - an act that contrasts sharply with both his statements on the campaign trail about the "disasters" of previous US military action in the region and the relative caution with which the Obama administration approached the question of whether to attack the Assad regime.

2:40AM

Runways, aircraft and fuel points targeted

Runways, aircraft and fuel points at the base were the targets of the air strikes, US official reportedly state.

The air strikes happened at 3.45am local time (1.45am GMT + 1).

2:35AM

Airfield used in Tuesday's chemical weapons attack struck

The Shayrat air base, near Homs in central Syria, was struck by the missiles, which were fired from two US vessels stationed in the Mediterranean.

The base is believed by US officials to have been used by Syrian jets in the chemical weapons attack on Tuesday.

It is not thought to be a large air base, and that 50-60 missiles would do serious damage.

At least 83 people died in Tuesday's attack, including 30 children. The atrocity changed Mr Trump's attitude to the Syria civil war and Bashar al-Assad.

Show more

2:28AM

US air strikes launched against Syria

60 Tomahawk missiles have struck Syrian regime targets in the first act of US military intervention.