
TURKEY NEED NOT CHOOSE BETWEEN RUSSIA, US: CAVUSOGLU

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Turkey's foreign minister said Sunday that Turkey has no obligation to take a side in any dispute between the U.S. and Russia.

Asked by reporters what the future holds for Turkish-Russian ties after Ankara welcomed U.S. missile strikes against a Syrian regime airbase last week -- the opposite of Moscows reaction -- Mevlut Cavusoglu said, Turkey "does not have to take a side between Russia and the U.S."

"We recently welcomed the U.S. strike on the Assad regime. We are also keen to continue efforts to build on the cease-fire within the scope of the Astana [Kazakhstan] talks," he told journalists in a meeting organized by the Directorate General of Press and Information in the Mediterranean city of Antalya.

"There is no contradiction here."

Cavusoglu also said Ankara has been on a "different page" with Moscow on Assad since the beginning, adding that Turkey "would have given up its principles if it cares what other countries think when theres a chemical attack and a crime against humanity."

Turkey has long said Syria has no future under the Bashar al-Assad regime, while Russia has come to the Syrian regimes aid.

The U.S. strike on a Syrian air base came in response to the Assad regime chemical weapons attack on the town of Khan Shaykhun, Idlib province, killing some 100 civilians and wounding hundreds of others, mostly children.

U.S. and Russian responses

Following the Tuesday attack, early Friday the U.S. fired as many as 60 Tomahawk missiles at a Syrian military airbase American officials believe was used to carry out the chemical attack.

Moscow condemned the strike as aggression on a sovereign nation.

Syria has been locked in a vicious civil war since early 2011, when the Bashar al-Assad regime cracked down on pro-democracy protests -- which erupted as part of the Arab Spring uprisings -- with unexpected ferocity.

Since then, more than a quarter-million people have been killed and more than 10 million displaced across the war-battered country, according to the UN.

The Syrian Center for Policy Research, however, put the death toll from the six-year conflict at more than 470,000 people.

Kaynak/Source: