
STOP INSISTING ON ASSAD LEADERSHIP: TURKEY TO RUSSIA

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Turkey has called on Russia to stop supporting President Bashar al-Assad following a US missile strike which drew praise from Turkish leaders and other supporters of militant groups in Syria.

Speaking live on state broadcaster TRT Haber on Sunday, Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said Moscow must stop insisting on Assads leadership.

Cavusoglu charged that Moscow had not taken necessary steps in the face of ceasefire breaches in Syria, inadvertently lending weight to some claims that the US missile strike had been aimed at stopping Syrian army advances against foreign-backed militants.

Takfiri groups such as Daesh and the al-Qaeda affiliate Fateh al-Sham Front, formerly known as Nusra Front, are exempt from the ceasefire deal which Russia reached with Turkey in December.

The early Friday missile attack by the US came ahead of a fresh push for peace talks. This is while President Assad is widely seen as holding the balance of power both in the talks and on the battlefield.

Cavusoglu said Turkey remained committed to the ceasefire, adding he had raised the issue of alleged truce violations by the Syrian government with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavov.

US cruise missiles hit Shayrat Airfield in Syrias Homs Province earlier this week, killing 15 Syrians and causing material damage. Washington said the offensive was prompted by an alleged chemical attack on the town of Khan Shaykhun in Syrias Idlib Province which killed over 80 civilians.

Washington has failed to provide any proof that the Syrian government was behind the purported gas attack, with Damascus categorically denying the US accusation.

This satellite image provided by DigitalGlobe shows an image captured on April 7 of the Shayrat Air Base in Syria, following a US missile attack on April 7, 2017. (Via AP)

The US attack sparked condemnation, with Syria denouncing the assault as a blatant aggression and accusing Washington of acting as an accomplice to terrorist groups operating in the Arab country.

Turkey, however, voiced support for the US aggression and reiterated its call for Assad's immediate ouster.

Syria has been hit by foreign-sponsored militancy since 2011. Damascus has repeatedly accused Washington and some of its regional allies of arming and funding different militant groups fighting Syrian government forces on the ground.

Russia and Iran have been providing assistance to Assads government to rid the Arab country of terrorist outfits. Turkey, however, has taken an opposite stance and is supporting anti-Damascus militants who are wreaking havoc in Syria.

Kaynak/Source: