
UK DEFENCE MINISTER: RUSSIA RESPONSIBLE BY PROXY FOR SYRIA CHEMICAL DEATHS

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Reuters (09 April 2017)

Britain said on Sunday Russia bore responsibility by proxy for civilian deaths in Syria last week caused by a poison gas attack that Washington says was carried out by the Moscow-backed government of Syrian President Bashar Assad.

At least 70 people died in what the United States says was a chemical weapons attack in rebel-held Syria. The attack prompted the United States to fire 59 cruise missiles into a Syrian air base from which it said the attack was launched.

Damascus and Moscow denied Syrian forces were behind the gas attack but Western countries dismissed their explanation that chemicals leaked from a rebel weapons depot after an air strike.

Russia has warned that the U.S. missile strikes could have serious consequences for the region.

The missile strikes catapulted Washington into confrontation with Russia, which has advisers on the ground aiding its close ally Assad.

British Defense Secretary Michael Fallon criticized Russia's support of Assad, describing the chemical attack as a war crime that happened "on their watch".

"By proxy Russia is responsible for every civilian death last week," Fallon wrote in the Sunday Times newspaper.

Conflicting reports from US, Russia on Syria strike effectiveness Conflicting reports from US, Russia on Syria strike effectiveness

Washington has long backed rebels fighting Assad in a multi-sided civil war that has killed more than 400,000 people and driven half of Syrians from their homes since 2011.

The United States has conducted air strikes against Islamic State, which controls territory in eastern and northern Syria, and a small number of U.S. troops are helping rebel militias.

Kaynak/Source: