

Attack on Syria act of aggression, says Russian president Vladimir Putin

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In a statement issued by the Kremlin, the Russian leader says Moscow is calling an emergency meeting of the United Nations' Security Council over the strike launched by the US, Britain and France.

US, France and UK launched combined airstrikes in Syria days after several people were killed in an alleged chemical attack.

Moscow: Russian President Vladimir Putin has denounced a strike on Syria launched by the United States and its allies as an "act of aggression" that will exacerbate humanitarian catastrophe in Syria.

In a statement issued by the Kremlin, the Russian leader says Moscow is calling an emergency meeting of the United Nations' Security Council over the strike launched by the US, Britain and France.

Putin added that the strike had a "destructive influence on the entire system of international relations." He reaffirmed Russia's view that a purported chemical attack in the Syrian town of Douma that prompted the strike was a fake.

Putin said that Russian military experts who inspected Douma found no trace of the attack. He criticised the US and its allies for launching the strike without waiting for inspectors from the international chemical weapons watchdog to visit the area.

Israel says in response to the American-led strike in Syria that the Middle Eastern country's "murderous actions" put itself in danger.

An official says in a statement today that President Donald Trump made clear last year that the use of chemical weapons was a red line not to be crossed.

He says the overnight operation carried out by the United States, France and Britain followed that example.

The official says that "Syria continues to carry out murderous actions and be a base for these actions and others, including Iran's, that put its territory, forces and leadership in peril."

The official spoke anonymously according to protocol. There has been no other official Israeli response yet.

Israel has issued several stern warnings of late about Iran's increased involvement along its border in Syria in Lebanon. British Foreign Secretary Boris Johnson has expressed his support for the airstrikes on Syria authorised by Prime Minister Theresa May.

Johnson tweeted today that he welcomed the news of the military strike against major chemical weapons facilities in Syria in concert with "our US and French allies."

Johnson said: "The world is united in its disgust for any use of chemical weapons, but especially against civilians." May authorised the strikes without a vote from Parliament, which has been in recess. She had received support from her Cabinet in a crisis session.

The US, France and Britain launched military strikes in Syria to punish President Bashar Assad for an apparent chemical attack against civilians and to deter him from doing it again, Trump said.

Syrians crowded onto the streets in noisy demonstrations of defiance afterward and their ally Russia denounced the attack.

Pentagon officials said the attacks targeted the heart of Assad's programs to develop and produce chemical weapons.

Syrian television reported that Syria's air defences, which are substantial, responded to the attack. Defence Secretary Jim Mattis said there were no reports of US losses in what he described as a heavy but carefully limited assault.

- AP