

Joint military strikes rock Damascus

Aim is to target the heart of Assad's programs to develop, produce chemical weapons

WASHINGTON (AP) — The United States, 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, President Donald Trump announced Friday. Pentagon officials said the attacks targeted the heart of Assad's programs to develop and produce chemical weapons.

Explosions lit up the skies over Damascus, the Syrian capital, as Trump spoke from the White House.

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

Trump said the U.S. is prepared to sustain economic, diplomatic and military pressure on Assad until he ends what the president called a criminal pattern of killing his own people with internationally banned chemical weapons.

"The evil and the despicable attack left mothers and fathers, infants and children, thrashing in pain and gasping for air. These are not the actions of a man; they are crimes of a monster instead," Trump said.

Mattis, however, said the assault was a "one-time shot," so long as Assad does not repeat his use of chemical weapons.

The strikes were carried out by manned aircraft and from ships that launched cruise missiles from the Mediterranean Sea.

Mattis disclosed that the U.S. had not yet confirmed that the most recent suspected Syrian chemical weapons attack, on April 7 in the Damascus suburb of Douma, included the use of sarin gas. He said at least one chemical was used — chlorine, which also has legitimate industrial uses and had not previously triggered a U.S. military response.

Mattis said the targets selected by U.S., British and French officials were meant to minimize civilian casualties.

"This is difficult to do in a situation like this," he said, in light of the volatility of chemical agents.

At a Pentagon news conference alongside Mattis, and with British and French military officers beside them to emphasize allied unity, Gen. Joseph Dunford said the attacks targeted mainly three targets in western Syria.

Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said missiles first struck a



Explosions lit up the skies with anti-aircraft fire, over Damascus, the Syrian capital, as the U.S. launches an attack on Syria targeting different parts of the Syrian capital Damascus, Syria, earlier today. Syria's capital has been rocked by loud explosions that lit up the sky with heavy smoke as U.S. President Donald Trump announced airstrikes in retaliation for the country's alleged use of chemical weapons.

AP Photo/Hassan Ammar

scientific research center in the Damascus area that he said was a center of Syrian research, development, production and testing of chemical and biological warfare technology. The second target was a chemical weapons storage facility west of Homs. He said this was believed to be the main site of Syrian sarin and precursor chemical production equipment.

The third target was a chemical weapons equipment storage facility and an important command post, also west of Homs, Dunford said.

British Prime Minister Theresa May said in London

that the West had tried "every possible" diplomatic means to stop Assad from using chemical weapons. "But our efforts have been repeatedly thwarted" by Syria and Russia, she said.

"So there is no practicable alternative to the use of force to degrade and deter the use of chemical weapons by the Syrian regime," May said. "This is not about intervening in a civil war. It is not about regime change."

French President Emmanuel Macron said in a statement that a target of the strike was the Syrian government's "clandestine chemical

arsenal."

The Syrian government has denied use of banned weapons.

The decision to strike, after days of deliberations, marked Trump's second order to attack Syria. He authorized a barrage of Tomahawk cruise missiles to hit a single Syrian airfield in April 2017 in retaliation for Assad's use of sarin gas against civilians.

Mattis estimated the latest air campaign was about twice the size of the 2017 strike. He added that the U.S. expects the Syrian government and its allies to conduct a "significant disinformation campaign," which the Pentagon would

rebut with additional information Saturday morning.

The air campaign could frustrate those in Trump's base who oppose military intervention and are wary of open-ended conflicts.

Trump chastised Syria's two main allies, Russia and Iran, for their roles in supporting "murderous dictators," and noted that Russian President Vladimir Putin had guaranteed a 2013 international agreement for Assad to get rid of all of his chemical weapons. He called on Moscow to change course and join the West in seeking a more responsible regime in Damascus.

"Russia must decide if it will continue down this dark path, or if it will join with civilized nations as a force for stability and peace," Trump said. "Hopefully, someday we'll get along with Russia, and maybe even Iran — but maybe not."

The U.S. missile strike a year ago, which targeted the airfield from which Syrian aircraft had launched their gas attack, was meant to deter Assad from further use of chemical weapons. Since that did not work, a more intense attack would aim to degrade his ability to carry out further such attacks, and would try to do this by hitting Syrian aircraft, military depots and chemical facilities, among other things.

The strikes that hit early Saturday in Syria came hours before the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons was set to arrive.

PROPERTY: 'High-end housing here has gone to the Tri-Cities'

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view, Howell would also like to provide a neighborhood of high-end homes that could sell for as high as \$1 million.

"High-end housing here has gone to the Tri-Cities," he said. "We want to draw some of that back."

Of course, all that has to pencil out financially. Realtors agree Hermiston's housing market is booming, but not all types of housing are in equal demand.

Colleen Winfrey of Miller Realty said \$150,000 to \$250,000 homes are in particularly high demand. Miller Realty worked with a developer recently on sales for a new subdivision of those types of homes in McNary, and she said it only took about 45 days to sell the 24 houses, well before ground had been broken on any of them.

"They were just gone," she said.

She said she thought mixed-use development with varying prices and styles of home is a good idea for large development in Hermiston, when done right.

"It has to be a balance that can make it profitable," she said.

Asked about the demand for high-end homes, she said with Hermiston's large base of working families those would likely be a harder sell.

"Maybe you can support \$700,000 homes in Bend, but the number of people who can support that price range here are few," she said.

On the other hand, Winfrey said, when someone is looking for that range of home in Hermiston there are very few options so there probably is some level of opportunity there.

One thing Winfrey said people are looking for is homes with three-car garages. Older homes stuck to one or

two, she said, but now it's common for two working parents and a teenage child or two to have three cars between them, making a three-car garage in hot demand.

Before any housing is built on the Feedville property, it would have to go through a re-platting process to divide it into lots. City planner Clint Spencer said the city had some preliminary discussions with Howell, and it would be reasonable to get the re-plat done in time to break ground this summer, which is what Howell said he is hoping to do if all goes as planned. Howell said the city has been "excellent" to work with so far.

The property is already zoned for residential use. At one time it was a feedlot, but after a different housing developer purchased it and had plans for a community situated around a golf course, the city went through an

18-month process to bring it inside the urban growth boundary. Spencer said the city went through the trouble of expanding the urban growth boundary because they wanted more control over what happened to the property, which had presented

odor nuisance issues during its feedlot days, and would likely not have done so if a credible developer hadn't presented plans for a residential neighborhood.

Those plans — under a different property owner than Columbia Basin Land —ulti-

mately fell through, but plans are being developed for it once again. Howell said some projects by the city that brought water and sewer closer to the property have helped reduce development costs this time, making it more realistic to build housing there.

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WHEN: Wednesday, April 18, 2018 • 7:00pm
 WHERE: Port of Morrow Riverfront Center
 2 Marine Drive, Boardman, OR

Morrow County Commissioner, Position No 2 candidates, Don Russell and Ray Akers and Circuit Court Judge candidates, Michael Breiling and Rob Collins have been invited to the forum to respond to mediated questions from the public. Oregon State University 4-H Division representatives will be available to discuss their campaign.

Boardman Chamber of Commerce is a non-profit entity, not for charity, but serves as an advocate organization for area businesses and community.



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Boardman Chamber Mission Statement: To promote, support and develop tourism, business and the enhancement of Boardman by building a strong partnership between business and community.