

Reactions Continue to Pour In On President Trump's Strike on Syria

Reactions continued to pour in Friday morning following President Donald Trump's decision to launch missile strikes against the Syrian airbase used to launch chemical weapons attacks on civilians on Thursday night.

Among the first to respond were U.S. Sens. Lindsey Graham (R-S.C.) and John McCain (R-Ariz.), perhaps two of the president's biggest opponents within his own party, who praised his decision:

We salute the skill and professionalism of the U.S. Armed Forces who carried out tonight's strikes in Syria. Acting on the orders of their commander-in-chief, they have sent an important message the United States will no longer stand idly by as Assad, aided and abetted by Putin's Russia, slaughters innocent Syrians with chemical weapons and barrel bombs.

Unlike the previous administration, President Trump confronted a pivotal moment in Syria and took action. For that, he deserves the support of the American people. Building on tonight's credible first step, we must finally learn the lessons of history and ensure that tactical success leads to strategic progress. That means following through with a new, comprehensive strategy in coordination with our allies and partners to end the conflict in Syria. The first measure in such a strategy must be to take Assad's air force—which is responsible not just for the latest chemical weapons attack, but countless atrocities against the Syrian people—completely out of the fight. We must also bolster support for the vetted Syrian opposition and

establish safe zones to address the ongoing humanitarian crisis. As we do, we can and must continue the campaign to achieve ISIS' lasting defeat.

Another of Trump's critics, Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.), was also quick to praise the decision in an interview with CNN's Anderson Cooper:

I don't believe this is a message; I believe this is actually a tactical action that furthers an objective, which is important ... it's an important and decisive step that was taken. It is not a message; it is an actual degrading of the capability of Syrian regime to carry out further chemical attacks against innocent civilians. This will degrade their capability to launch those attacks from the air, and I think it was an important step and hopefully it's part of a comprehensive strategy moving forward to bring to a close this chaos that's happening in Syria.

Congressional leadership backed the decision to strike the Syrian base. Speaker of the House Paul Ryan (R-Wis.) also offered his support for the president's decision:

Earlier this week the Assad regime murdered dozens of innocent men, women, and children in a barbaric chemical weapons attack. Tonight, the United States responded. This action was appropriate and just. These tactical strikes make clear that the Assad regime can no longer count on American inaction as it carries out atrocities against the Syrian people. Resolving the years-long crisis in Syria is a complex task, but Bashar al-Assad must be held accountable and his enablers must be persuaded to change course. I look forward to the administration further engaging Congress in this effort.

Democrats largely criticized the decision to strike, calling it reckless and careless. House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi (R-Calif.) hasn't responded as of this writing, but Rep. Tulsi

Gabbard (R-Hawaii) made a statement indicative of most liberals' responses:

It angers and saddens me that President Trump has taken the advice of war hawks and escalated our illegal regime change war to overthrow the Syrian government. This escalation is short-sighted and will lead to more dead civilians, more refugees, the strengthening of al-Qaeda and other terrorists, and a direct confrontation between the United States and Russia—which could lead to nuclear war.

This administration has acted recklessly without care or consideration of the dire consequences of the United States attack on Syria without waiting for the collection of evidence from the scene of the chemical poisoning. If President Assad is indeed guilty of this horrible chemical attack on innocent civilians, I will be the first to call for his prosecution and execution by the International Criminal Court. However, because of our attack on Syria, this investigation may now not even be possible. And without such evidence, a successful prosecution will be much harder.

Not every Democrat was critical of the decision, though. Senate Minority Whip Dick Durbin (D-Ill.) gave a more middle-of-the-road response:

My preliminary briefing by the White House indicated this was a measured response to the Syrian nerve gas atrocity. Any further action will require close scrutiny by Congress, and any escalation beyond airstrikes or missile strikes will require engaging the American people in that decision.

Sen. Ben Nelson (D-Fla.) actually praised the president's actions:

I support the admin's strike on the air base that launched the chemical attack. I hope this teaches Assad not to use chemical weapons again.

Likewise, not every Republican was happy with the decision to strike Syria. Sen. Rand Paul (R-Ky.), who has been working with the president to push through a health care reform bill, issued this statement:

While we all condemn the atrocities in Syria, the United States was not attacked. The president needs congressional authorization for military action as required by the Constitution, and I call on him to come to Congress for a proper debate. Our prior interventions in this region have done nothing to make us safer, and Syria will be no different.

His father, former Rep. Ron Paul, went as far as to defend the Assad regime, effectively taking Russia's position on the matter:

It doesn't make any sense for Assad under these conditions to all of a sudden use poison gases—I think there's zero chance he would have done this deliberately. It's the neo-conservatives who are benefiting tremendously from this because it's derailed the progress that has already been made moving toward a more peaceful settlement in Syria.

World reaction has been generally positive. As of this writing, leaders from the following countries are praising the president's decision to launch the missile attack on Syria: Israel, Australia, Saudi Arabia, Turkey, Japan, Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Italy, the European Union, the United Arab Emirates and Bahrain.

The list of countries that have been critical of the strikes is a bit shorter: Russia, Iran and Indonesia. {eo}