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Russia Must Restrain Itself and Assad in Syria, Says U.S.

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The United States has called on Russia and the Syrian government to stop their offensive operations in Syria, the Reuters news agency reported Monday.

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry made the comments after a Russian helicopter was shot down while carrying out a reportedly humanitarian mission in the city of Aleppo.

The city, an opposition stronghold in the east of the country, has been under siege by Russian-backed Syrian government forces for almost a month.

"It is critical that Russia restrain both itself and the Assad regime from ⊠conducting offensive operations, just as it is our responsibility to get⊠ the opposition to refrain from engaging in those operations," Kerry ⊠told reporters on Monday night.

“These⊠ are important days to determine whether or not Russia and the Assad ⊠regime are going to live up to the effort to end the violence and to ⊠resume peace talks”, he said.

“The evidence thus far is very troubling to everybody.”

The Russian Mi-8 helicopter was shot down over rebel-held territory in northern Syria, killing all five people on board, Russia’s Defense Ministry confirmed.

Syrian government forces and Russia’s military announced a humanitarian operation to relieve the city last week, dropping leaflets telling fighters to surrender and civilians to leave.

U.S. officials have suggested that the operation in Aleppo is a way of evacuating civilians from the city to then attack the rebels holding out there. Some 25,000 people are thought to be trapped in the area.

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