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Kerry Calls for Investigation Into Russian and Syrian 'War Crimes,' As Moscow Authorizes 'Indefinite' Aerial Campaign

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U.S. State Department

U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry on Friday called for an investigation into possible war crimes perpetrated by Russia and the government of Syrian President Bashar Assad in that shattered nation's ongoing civil war, the Associated Press reported.

Kerry's call was prompted specifically by an incident he says took place overnight, in which Syrian forces loyal to Assad bombed another hospital, killing 20 people and wounding 100, AP reported. The strike follows a wider trend of apparent purposeful targeting of civilians by Russia and Assad.

Moscow entered the conflict just over a year ago, claiming it was flying air missions against

the Islamic State. The Kremlin, however, quickly appeared to be in Syria primarily to support Assad. Russia has been accused of helping Assad target civilian targets, specifically hospitals.

The two governments owe the world "more than an explanation," Kerry said, insisting that the pattern of strikes on non-combatants "beg for an appropriate investigation of war crimes," and represent a "targeted strategy ... to terrorize civilians," the AP cited him as saying.

The Russian State Duma on Friday, meanwhile, authorized the Kremlin to carry out its aerial campaign in Syria indefinitely. When President Vladimir Putin launched the operation on Sept. 30 of last year, Russian citizens and the world were promised it would last just three to four months.

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