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Russia, Syria Call Temporary Halt To Aleppo Airstrikes

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Aleppo Media Center / AP

Russian and Syrian aircraft have been ordered to halt the bombing of Aleppo, a stronghold for forces standing in opposition to Syrian President Bashar Assad, Russian Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu announced on Tuesday. The move is designed to presage an eight-hour "humanitarian ceasefire" scheduled for Thursday, Oct. 20, giving civilians time to escape the devastation.

"From 10 a.m. today, air strikes conducted by the Russian and Syrian air forces in the region will stop," Shoigu said, the TASS news agency reported. "We appeal to the leadership of the countries which have influence on armed groups in eastern Aleppo to persuade the leadership [of these groups] to cease hostilities and leave the city," Shoigu said.

The move follows a unilateral Russian announcement that a unilateral "humanitarian ceasefire" would take place in Aleppo between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Oct. 20 to give civilians and rebel forces the

chance to leave the city.
Humanitarian corridors will open along the northern corridor of Castello Road — which has seen heavy fighting between opposition and government forces in recent months — and a market to the south called Souk El-Hai, the Russian Defense Ministry said.

Russia's aerial campaign in Aleppo has come under sharp criticism from Western nations amid a breakdown in negotiations to bring the raging Syrian civil war to a peaceful close. The Defense Ministry has said that the ceasefire will move the ball forward in the city while military experts meet in Geneva to work on separating extremist groups in Aleppo from moderate opposition forces.

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